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Government
Publications



Nº 9

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

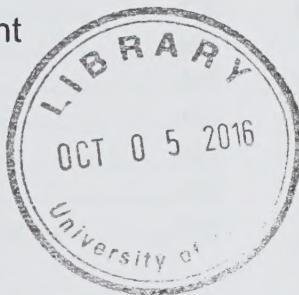
Second Session, 41st Parliament

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Wednesday 28 September 2016

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller



Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 41^e législature

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mercredi 28 septembre 2016

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 28 September 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 28 septembre 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 27, 2016, on the motion for allocation of time on the following bill:

Bill 13, An Act in respect of the cost of electricity /
Projet de loi 13, Loi concernant le coût de l'électricité.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always an honour to stand on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin. On this one, Mr. Speaker, really, I don't need any notes because it is a time allocation bill and it is on an issue that is near and dear, and frustrating a lot of people across my riding. People are finding themselves challenged, day in and day out, to make ends meet. People are finding themselves trying to express their views to the Liberal government. However, once again, what we're dealing with here this morning is exactly what people are frustrated with: that they are not being heard. They are not being provided with the opportunity to shout out how frustrated they are with the direction this government has taken. And, again, with this time allocation on this particular bill, it expresses the true sentiments of what a lot of people in this province here are feeling.

I want to just highlight a particular individual out of my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin. There are many individuals across Ontario who have taken up initiatives, who have taken up actions, who have gone forward and signed on to petitions, but I want to highlight one particular person: Her name is Tanya Giles. She comes from Manitoulin Island. One person decided and said, "I am going to be a difference maker. I am going to spread the message. I am going to initiate an action. I am going to create a discussion so that individuals across Manitoulin Island will be able to express themselves so that we, together"—and just so you know, Mr. Speaker, I presented her petition in the House just the week before last. She, on her own, managed to pull together almost 1,900 signatures on Manitoulin Island in order for them to express their views of disappointment by directing this petition to the wrong-headed direction that this government is taking with the sale of Hydro One. That is one

individual who said, "I am going to stand on my feet, make my voice heard and do something for my community, my neighbours and my area." That is commendable; it is remarkable.

The problem with that, Mr. Speaker, is too many people are in that position in order to have their voices heard and make sure that their views are being expressed here at Queen's Park. What happens is it creates a disconnect, because a lot of them have been voicing their disapproval of the direction this government is going in, with the continued wrong-headed decision of the privatization and the sale of Hydro One.

A lot of people have been asking this government, "Get off of that direction. It is not reflecting what we want. We didn't vote for this. We are disappointed with the direction of the Kathleen Wynne government. We don't want this to proceed. We see what is happening to our hydro bills day in and day out, each and every month. We are struggling, and you are not listening to us. You are not hearing our cries for help."

So we get a step in the right direction—and I will say it's a step in the right direction—but that step was never necessary. We should never have had to take that step, which is removing the HST off of home heating, because it should have never been part of our hydro costs.

Those are some of the things that individuals across my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin are extremely frustrated with. Again, this is not something that people are going to let go. It will be there now, it will be there tomorrow and it will be there in 2018 when this government comes to judgment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I guess when you can't stand the heat, you get out of the kitchen, as the old saying goes, and with time allocation, you're certainly getting out of the kitchen.

For six years, the Liberals under Premiers McGuinty and Wynne have been taking away 8% of the total of our hydro bills. Now the heat in the kitchen is getting so hot they're making a big deal out of giving us a rebate of our own money. Premier Wynne thinks she can fool us into believing she's doing it not for political reasons. It has nothing to do with having the pants scared off her when Conservative Raymond Cho stole what was considered a safe Liberal seat in Scarborough-Rouge River.

You see, Speaker, Toronto has been the bread and butter of the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals. That's where the core of their supporters are, coming from the greater Toronto area. But when the chickens come home to roost

and there's a new rooster in the henhouse and he's blue—he's not red—well, they finally sit up and take notice.

We've been saying for months that the voters in Ontario are unhappy. They're unhappy with time allocation. They're unhappy when hydro rates are out of control; hydro bills are going up again in November. I guess the Wynne government was busy with other matters and wasn't really listening to what was going on. She wasn't listening to the rest of the province, as we have been. Now when the voters in her own backyard kicked her in the pants, well, all of a sudden we're getting 8% of our own money back. I represent Windsor-Tecumseh. This 8% in the HST, the PST, was brought in by the person I replaced, Dwight Duncan, the former Liberal finance minister.

As you know, Speaker, New Democrats argued against this from day one. We said it should not have been put on hydro bills. It's an essential commodity. In fact, I was blown away when the Minister of Agriculture stood up here in the House last week or the week before and said that philosophically, he was always opposed to it. Imagine that. He was always opposed to having the HST, the Ontario portion, charged on electricity rates, and he was a member of the cabinet. I don't know who he was expressing his displeasure to. Whatever happened, it didn't waft out anyplace else. I don't know if other cabinet ministers opposed it, if they told the Premier that. I don't think they made it much of a public issue until now, when they realize that everybody else in Ontario is dead set against it. Now they're saying, "I've always been against it myself." I don't know, Speaker. It comes down to believability. It comes down to principle, I guess.

0910

They put it on as a cash grab. No way did New Democrats support it then; we don't support it now. We knew the impact it would have on families in Ontario, on our senior citizens in Ontario and on our small business communities. Oh, we huffed and we puffed, of course, but we couldn't blow down that big red Liberal House or the blue House up in Ottawa, for that matter, at that time. The HST on hydro bills was imposed by the Harper Conservatives and the McGuinty Liberals. Do the math. Premier Wynne was a member of that government, and the leader of the official opposition, Mr. Brown, was a member of the Harper Conservative government at that time when they started charging the HST on Ontario's hydro bills. We tried to tell them it was a mistake. They wouldn't listen then; they're not listening now.

A lot of people thought it was a terrible idea. A lot of people today say to the federal government, if they're doing it in Ontario, take it off in Ottawa and the Canadian portion as well. It only makes sense. If it's not good enough for the ratepayers in Ontario, it shouldn't be good enough that we have to pay the federal portion of it either. What are we waiting for? These are their federal Liberal cousins. They said they now had a friend in Ottawa. Well, it's time for that friend to step forward and

maybe give us a high-five. It doesn't always work with the royal family; maybe it'll work with the Wynne Liberal government. We'll have to see.

I have to say that the political leadership we're seeing on this bill leaves one to question what's really going on. I think they're trying to duck and cover on this, cover their—well, I'll leave it up to you, Speaker, to determine what parts of their political philosophy or anatomy they're trying to cover with this bill. Behind the headlines, behind the motivation, there is a bottom line: It's the sudden realization that they're in political trouble. What's the least they can do now? That's right: This is the very least they can do now, as they try to duck and cover. If they really meant it—as the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has said that politically, philosophically, he has always been opposed to it—they shouldn't have charged it in the first place. They should be calling Ottawa and telling the Prime Minister their new views on this.

Of course, the political difference is, on this side of the House, where we've always opposed it, we've stood in place and said, loud and clear, "Don't do it."

It was wrong to charge Ontario residents 8% on their hydro bills, just as it's wrong now to bring in time allocation on this bill to shut down debate as we bring forth the views of people across this province. It was wrong in 2010 to charge it. It was wrong in 2011. It was wrong in 2012. It was wrong in 2013. It was wrong in 2014. It was wrong in 2015. And it's wrong today. It's unnecessary to wait till 2017 for the rebate. Do it now. Take it off. Just stop it. Do the right thing. If it's wrong, it's not right. And if it's not right, don't do it. Don't keep charging struggling families in Ontario a tax that you now say is no longer necessary. Don't charge them and give them a rebate. Kill that tax. Tell the Liberal Prime Minister in Ottawa to kill that tax. Stop this time allocation. Let the people on this side of the House stand up and have their say on what you've been doing wrong over there. And you've been doing it wrong ever since you brought in this sales tax on an essential commodity.

There's another by-election coming up in Niagara West—Glanbrook. You're not going to win there if you don't kill that tax today. You haven't got a chance there if you don't kill that tax today. So when are you going to learn your lesson?

There was a story in yesterday's Windsor Star about hydro rates. One of Windsor's most prominent business owners is quoted in the story by Grace Macaluso. Terry Rafih is the CEO of the Rafih Auto Group. He sits on the board of our regional economic development commission. And this goes to time allocation, Speaker. He says he opened his hydro bill last month and he almost choked—almost choked, Speaker. His quote is: "I saw this bill for \$21,000 for one month." That's \$21,000 for 31 days. He almost choked when he read the bill. Next to his labour costs, hydro and natural gas are his second-highest costs, and he says they're out of control. Thank you, Terry Rafih.

We know they're out of control. I had an email just this week, Speaker, from a mushroom farmer in my area.

He brings in mushrooms; he ships most of them across the border; a lot of them are organic. Denis Vidmar is his name. He brings in thousands of fresh mushrooms six days a week; most are grown organically, and he ships them across the border to Whole Foods stores in the American Midwest. He's on Rhodes Drive in Windsor. He opened a warehouse last year. His hydro bills last year were \$500 a month—\$500. This year: doubled, Speaker. How do you come up with a business plan and create jobs in Ontario when your hydro bills are doubling year after year after year? This just doesn't make sense. He wants me to tell him why. My only response is: Ask the Liberals; they're the ones calling the shots.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm happy to rise to participate in this debate and talk specifically about Bill 13, the Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act, 2016, that would, if passed, put in place an 8% rebate on electricity bills for eligible customers. This legislative framework would put in place the requirement for this rebate to be provided by January 1, 2017, but not the mechanism needed to deliver the program. With a January 1, 2017, implementation target date, there is a pressing need to provide local distribution companies—your local utilities—and other entities responsible for delivering the rebate to consumers with the details on implementation in order to make the necessary adjustments to their billing and customer information systems. To ensure that all local distribution companies have the time and information required to deliver on the government's intended rebate of the provincial portion of the HST directly on customer bills in January, there is a pressing need to expedite the legislative approvals.

Updates to the LDC billing systems are time-intensive and, of course, operationally complex. The LDCs are requesting the opportunity to consult with the ministry on the specifics of what billing system changes would be required should the bill be passed. Following consultations, the LDCs will require certainty as to the required changes before adjusting their billing systems. Certainly for our local utilities, this would include a general regulation that's made under the Ontario Rebate for Electricity Consumers Act in order to put in place the required mechanisms that would allow for electricity vendors to be reimbursed for the amounts credited to consumer accounts, as well as other important provisions related to payments, reporting requirements and, of course, billing requirements.

Without these regulatory mechanisms, rebates cannot flow from government to utilities and then from, ultimately, the utilities to consumers. The regulation cannot be filed until the act has been passed and the authority to create the regulation has been established.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Energy has already been working with many of these local distribution companies right across our great province of Ontario, as well as the Electricity Distributors Association, the Independent Electricity System Operator—the IESO, as we know

them—and the Ontario Energy Board to implement these measures, pending, of course, legislative approvals.

For some LDCs, filing of the regulation will be required before the billing system changes are initiated. Should there be a delay in enacting the program, these LDCs may not have enough time to ensure they are operational for January 1, 2017.

Mr. Speaker, providing the LDCs with program certainty and additional time to implement the 8% rebate program will facilitate a smoother transition on January 1, 2017, and ensure that Ontario consumers receive the 8% rebate in a timely fashion.

0920

It's important to recognize that this legislation that we're talking about through the time allocation debate creates a requirement that the rebate be provided but, after its passage—as long as this bill passes—there is much more work to be done to implement it by January 1. These updates—with our local utilities, the distribution companies—those billing systems are quite complex and time-intensive as well, so there's a pressing need to provide the LDCs and other entities responsible for delivering the rebate to consumers with the details on implementation in order to make the necessary adjustments to their billing and customer information systems.

So, concluding, making sure that we provide the LDCs with program certainty and additional time to implement the 8% rebate program would facilitate a smoother transition on January 1, 2017, and ensure that Ontario consumers receive the 8% rebate in a timely fashion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Lanark—sorry, you don't have any time left. You're out of time.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Well, they're not going to use theirs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): That's fine.

Seeing none, Mr. Naqvi has moved notice of motion number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

I believe the “ayes” have it.

This will be deferred to after question period for the vote.

Vote deferred.

PROMOTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA PROMOTION DU LOGEMENT ABORDABLE

Mr. Ballard moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to amend or repeal various Acts with respect to housing and planning / Projet de loi 7, Loi modifiant ou abrogeant diverses lois en ce qui concerne le logement et l'aménagement du territoire.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Now we'll go to the Minister of Housing and poverty reduction.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me an opportunity to speak to Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act. I've already mentioned that I'll be sharing my time with the member for Trinity-Spadina, so I'll move along. The legislation I'll be speaking to today was originally introduced by our government this past May. I had the privilege of reintroducing it earlier this month as a key plank in a suite of legislative priorities for the government to be achieved over the fall session.

Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act, is a landmark piece of legislation that, if passed, is designed to increase housing access and affordability for all Ontarians. Through our Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy and legislation like Bill 7, Ontario is answering the call to provide more affordable housing across the province and end chronic homelessness within our communities by 2025.

Too many Ontarians are struggling to keep a roof over their heads: the homeless teen on the street, the woman fleeing from domestic violence to the safety of a shelter, the young family struggling to make rent, the senior citizens fighting to hold on to a lifetime of memories in a home where those memories happened. We can and must do better for them and every Ontarian.

We know that when people have a home they are healthier, able to pursue employment and equipped to participate in and contribute to their communities. By increasing the tools available to our local partners to improve access to housing, Ontario will continue to be a place where the work of building stronger communities begins at home.

The Promoting Affordable Housing Act, if passed, would amend four existing pieces of legislation: the Housing Services Act, the Residential Tenancies Act, the Planning Act and the Development Charges Act. Its aim is to increase choice by introducing inclusionary zoning, expand existing housing availability by making it easier to develop second units in homes, and encourage small landlords to provide rental housing, all with the goal of increasing affordability and access for Ontarians. By increasing the flexibility of the housing sector, we can ensure that Ontario families find suitable housing, and keep the most vulnerable from going to sleep without a roof over their head. The member from Trinity-Spadina and I will speak more about these changes in a few moments. But before we do, I'd like to provide some context on the importance of these legislative changes before us.

Bill 7 is a core component of Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, a strategy that was launched in 2010 by my colleague from the riding of Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale. Entitled Building Foundations: Building Futures, it was the first of its kind in Ontario and, as that member has said previously, recognized that local flexibility with accountability offers the best approach to housing, service delivery and

building strong communities. The legacy of that first strategy, Mr. Speaker, is realized each and every day by those who have since embarked on an entirely new life trajectory because of the vision and practical solutions laid out in that strategy.

One of those solutions was consolidating five separate homelessness-related programs into a single flexible outcome-focused program called the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, or CHPI for short. The outcome: 30,000 families and individuals who were lifted off the streets and a further 100,000 at-risk households who never had to learn first-hand what it's like to lose a roof over their heads. I want to thank the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale for his work toward ending chronic homelessness and laying the groundwork for its prevention.

Improving access to affordable housing and ending homelessness, especially youth homelessness, are subjects that I hold near and dear to my heart. I cannot overstate the impact of this work on the lives of those individuals. But I have seen first-hand that there is still far more work to do. As the temperature cools around us here in Ontario, I want to take a moment to tell you about an extraordinary night I spent on the streets of York region, experiencing first-hand what homeless youth from our community go through every winter night.

Some time ago I was participating in the second annual 360°Experience, where community leaders spend a bone-chilling winter night on the streets, each re-enacting real-life 360°kids client scenarios. Organizers wanted us to better understand what homeless youth in York region face every night and to raise funds for a new youth shelter.

My scenario made me a 17-year-old single mom with a baby. It was minus 22 degrees, and the wind picked up as I and my partner, Bruce Bailey, who was then the chair of the organization, headed to the only shelter in York region that could take us in that night: the Blue Door Shelters for families at Leeder Place on Highway 11, north of Newmarket. Bruce and I were given two Viva bus tickets and \$3 before being turned out of the 360°kids home base facility on Yonge Street at 8:30 p.m. That's when that facility closed. Those bus tickets had to get us to the Blue Door Shelter and back. The \$3 was to buy a cup of coffee. We were also shadowed by two volunteers, to ensure we didn't freeze to death. But I'm pretty sure in real life no one shadowed the 17-year-old mom and her baby we were pretending to be.

Arriving by bus at the Newmarket station, Bruce and I learned that there was no bus to the Leeder Place shelter, a five-kilometre walk north along Highway 11 in the dark and cold. Thankfully, an off-duty security guard took pity on us and drove us to the shelter on his way home. Would the 17-year-old mom and her baby been so lucky? We hope so.

Safely inside the warm and bright facility, Bruce and I learned about Blue Door Shelters, serving York region's homeless since 1982. We learned that in 2013, the shelters turned away almost 6,000 people because they lacked capacity. We learned that in 2014, Blue Door

Shelters provided more than 80,000 meals and close to 28,000 nights of safety to homeless people and families in York region.

0930

Leaving the shelter, we faced a one-hour slog south along Highway 11 in minus-30-degree cold to the bus stop. There were no sidewalks. Thick, uneven ice was underfoot. Lighting was minimal and cars whizzed by dangerously close. Using our second bus ticket, we returned to Richmond Hill and spent the remainder of the night moving from coffee shop to coffee shop. A couple of middle-aged guys with silver hair were allowed to stay as long as they wanted in the early morning hours, but I suspect a young person who is homeless would soon have been told to move along. I'm told that coffee shops, all-night restaurants and bank foyers are favoured warming spots, and we saw that first-hand.

Back at the 360°kids home base, our starting place, we were given a sleeping bag and a tarp and invited to spend the wee hours of the morning sleeping in the deep snow in the backyard until the facility opened at 6 a.m. I've done a fair amount of winter camping, and I was well equipped for the temperatures we were in, so digging a trough and curling up into it and falling asleep wasn't a big problem for me. But I couldn't help thinking about a 17-year-old mum and her baby: What would she have done on that cold winter night?

What we learned that night was how tough and resilient the youth are who face this life without the support of family or community. When the doors at the 360°kids home base opened and the smell of a hot breakfast wafted out that morning, we all celebrated our survival. There were a lot of high-fives going on until we were asked who wanted to do it again that night and the night after and the night after that, like many young people must. I'll tell you, it was a sobering moment. The jubilance at making it through the night was quickly gone.

When I'm out late at night now, I pay special attention to the young people in coffee shops. Do they have a place to call home? Does someone care for them? Finally, I wonder about the 17-year-old mum and her baby whose nighttime trip in search of shelter Bruce and I re-enacted. I hope they face a better future. Here in this chamber, we have the power to make that happen.

Ontario took an important step in 2015 to help advance our long-term goal of ending homelessness by striking an Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness. I was at the table for the launch of the panel that was co-chaired by my colleagues the member from London North Centre and the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale.

As part of our second Poverty Reduction Strategy, the strategy I am now responsible for, Ontario set a long-term goal to end homelessness. The province worked with the expert panel to get practical advice on how to best approach this goal, beginning with ways to define and measure homelessness. With no consistent definition of homelessness or methods for counting the number of

people experiencing homelessness in Ontario, defining the problem remained elusive and measuring the success of our programs difficult, so we needed to start at the beginning.

The panel was established to provide expert advice to government on definitions, enumeration, setting a homelessness-related target and building capacity within that sector. In addition to setting a target to end chronic homelessness by 2025, we set four priority areas to guide provincial action, focusing on:

- chronic homelessness;
- youth homelessness;
- indigenous homelessness; and
- homelessness following transition from provincially funded institutions and service systems, such as hospitals, prisons, youth justice, violence against women shelters and the child welfare system.

We heard many voices and perspectives on the panel from other panel members, from experts and most importantly from people with lived experience of homelessness. The 13 experts at the table brought a wide range of expertise and knowledge, including the medical community and those whose organizations deliver service to the homeless. One individual brought a unique voice to the table, having lived the experience of being impoverished and homeless. I'm particularly glad two representatives at the table had experience representing First Nation members.

Working with the panel and meeting the organizations dedicated to helping the homeless and poor was a moving experience and one that left me even more determined to do something about this problem. Our long-term goal of ending chronic homelessness is an ambitious goal. We're focused on it because it's the right thing to do. We know it costs us more in health care, policing and justice than it does to help house someone. We're looking at addressing Ontarians' needs across the housing continuum, from homelessness and emergency shelters through to subsidized rentals and home ownership.

It's more important than ever before to make sure our dollars are getting measurable results and helping people. That's why our Poverty Reduction Strategy ensures that our investments are rooted in evidence. We know that one size does not fit all in terms of solutions to tackling housing and homelessness. That is why we're building on the foundation laid by the first Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy.

It's been more than 20 years since the Ministry of Housing has had a stand-alone ministry, which highlights the importance our government places on this area as we move forward with the next phase of the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy.

Before handing the baton to me as Ontario's new Minister of Housing, the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Westdale provided an important update to the strategy just this past March. The update builds on the important work of the first strategy while creating new tools for increasing affordable housing and ending chronic homelessness. The update to the strategy is bold

and transformative, and invests 178 million new dollars over three years. It focuses on increasing the supply of affordable housing, supporting people and ending chronic homelessness. It relies on partnerships with the private sector, our municipal partners and the federal government.

The updated strategy takes into account the input the government received at 38 stakeholder meetings during the summer of 2015, and from 113 formal written submissions that reflect the housing needs of Ontarians across the province. From this feedback and under the strategy, we are making essential investments across a range of targeted projects. We're modernizing Ontario's social housing system to better meet the needs of tenants and providers, and to create more integrated communities. Currently, Ontarians in need of rental assistance rely primarily on rent-geared-to-income assistance, which is most often tied to specific units at specific addresses. So we're working on a framework for a portable housing benefit that would give people receiving financial assistance more flexibility to choose where they live: closer to family, social support networks, schools and employment opportunities. The portable housing benefit framework would allow Ontario's municipalities to provide more housing choices to more tenants and get them housed faster.

Earlier this month, our government announced a portable housing benefit pilot program to help survivors of domestic violence escape unsafe situations. It allows them to immediately find housing in their communities instead of waiting for a social housing unit to become available. We are piloting this program in 22 communities across Ontario. In partnership with our federal counterparts, we're investing more than \$20 million over two years to provide ongoing assistance to approximately 1,000 survivors of domestic violence each year under the pilot program. Based on the outcomes, we will consider ways to enhance the program and extend the portable benefit to other communities.

To help meet our government's goal to end chronic homelessness by 2025, we are also investing in more supportive housing to the tune of \$100 million over three years. This investment will be focused on the four provincial priority areas I mentioned earlier to support our goal to end chronic homelessness. We have heard from our sector partners that this is where the need is greatest, so we've taken action. Up to 4,000 families and individuals will receive housing allowances and the wraparound services they need. The funding will also support the construction of up to 1,500 new supportive housing units over the longer term, eventually assisting up to 6,000 individuals and families.

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As part of our efforts to end homelessness, we launched the Community Homeless Prevention Initiative. As I've mentioned, we affectionately call it CHPI. CHPI aims to improve access to suitable and affordable housing and homelessness services. It gives service managers greater flexibility to design programs based on local

needs and priorities. Under CHPI, service managers can create their own local programs under four broad service categories:

—emergency shelter solutions for people who are experiencing homelessness or are in a crisis;

—long-term housing and transitional housing with supports;

—service and supports, including street outreach, case management and transportation; and

—homelessness prevention, including emergency financial assistance and education programs to help people stay in their homes.

CHPI supports a transition towards a system that is focused on more proactive and permanent solutions to addressing homelessness. In 2014-15, our government enhanced CHPI funding by \$42 million to a total amount of almost \$294 million per year—a 17% annual increase of funding for homelessness services. We're also providing an additional \$15 million each year over the next two years, bringing our government's annual investment to almost \$324 million by 2018.

We are developing an indigenous housing strategy in partnership with indigenous communities because we know that First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people are significantly overrepresented among people experiencing homelessness in Canada. A significant challenge is ensuring that culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services are accessible to indigenous people across the province, which is why a unique strategy is required. Since 2008, Ontario has committed over \$150 million to off-reserve indigenous households in the province of Ontario. Our government will continue our sustained engagement with First Nations, Métis and Inuit partners to develop this important strategy.

The investments I've mentioned are helping to make housing more affordable for people of all income levels in Ontario. They are also helping to keep roofs over the heads of those who have nowhere left to turn. But there is still much work to do. Housing and homelessness are about more than the bottom line, and the value of a dollar depends on the environment it is invested in. That's why we're proposing a suite of policy and legislative tools in Bill 7 that we hope will have a meaningful impact on affordable housing.

During our government's extensive consultations on the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy update, we heard about the need to foster diverse, inclusive communities. To help reach this goal, we've provided a range of planning, financial and other tools through the Promoting Affordable Housing Act to help municipalities create more affordable housing.

One of those tools we're proposing is called inclusionary zoning. The proposed change to the Planning Act would, if passed, give municipalities the option to require affordable housing units to be included in residential developments. This would enable the private sector to play a much larger role in providing affordable housing. According to the city of Toronto's chief planner, Toronto could have built 12,000 affordable housing units in the last five years had inclusionary zoning been in place. We

want to help municipalities ensure that they have a range of housing at their disposal that will give their citizens better choices, because affordable housing options should address the needs of those across the housing spectrum and at various income levels.

Inclusionary zoning is just one of the many tools that the province is moving ahead with to increase the supply of affordable housing. We've consulted over the summer with our stakeholders on the former Bill 204 and on potential regulatory content to support inclusionary zoning. We met with various stakeholders representing the municipal, planning, housing, non-profit and development sectors. We know that these different sectors have different perspectives about how inclusionary zoning should be tailored for Ontario, but overall, our stakeholders were supportive of inclusionary zoning. In fact, Mitch Cohen, president of the Daniels Corp., has said that inclusionary zoning is "the only way to ensure that affordable housing will be built across this city." The message is clear: Inclusionary zoning is a necessary tool that will change the affordable housing landscape in Ontario.

Throughout the consultations, we heard a common view that municipalities should be given the flexibility to tailor inclusionary zoning to local social and economic conditions. We want to ensure that they have this flexibility, and that includes finding a balance between inclusionary zoning policies and section 37. Section 37 of the Planning Act permits a municipality to authorize increases in allowable height and/or density through the zoning bylaw in return for community benefits like day-care spaces, transit improvements or heritage preservation.

Bill 7 would restrict municipalities applying inclusionary zoning from using section 37, except as provided for by regulation. The legislation would allow the minister to make a regulation that could specify the circumstances under which section 37 may be used by a municipality within the parameters of inclusionary zoning. Our recent consultations will inform potential future regulations relating to section 37 and inclusionary zoning. It's important to note, Mr. Speaker, that Bill 7 would not affect the use of development charges or parkland dedication in combination with inclusionary zoning.

Inclusionary zoning has been used extensively by communities around the world, including in England, and in over 500 municipalities in the United States. We want to make sure that our framework allows inclusionary zoning to be implemented in a way that works for Ontario's municipalities.

We are also proposing changes to the Development Charges Act to exempt secondary suites in new homes from development charges. Secondary suites are a source of affordable rental units for many low- to moderate-income renters. I've always believed in allowing secondary suites in established neighbourhoods. We know they are already being built in many neighbourhoods, but the proposed amendment would support increasing the supply of rental accommodation. These proposed changes

would help to increase the supply and range of affordable housing options in Ontario communities.

Our proposed reforms to the Residential Tenancies Act and the Housing Services Act would, if passed, help to further modernize social housing. My parliamentary assistant, the member from Trinity-Spadina, will elaborate more on the proposed amendments in these two pieces of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the reforms we are proposing reflect the significant input we received over the past year from municipalities, community groups and the public at large, and we continue to have conversations with our citizens, stakeholders and other levels of government about affordable housing. This past June, for example, in one of my first duties as minister, I participated in the federal-provincial-territorial ministers' meeting in Victoria on the development of a national housing strategy. It was a positive meeting. We agreed to move forward collaboratively to develop a national housing strategy over the next few months, one that encompasses the needs of all Canadians. In service of that aim, I recently hosted a number of expert round tables across the province to discuss the national housing strategy. I will be hosting another one this week with our indigenous partners to get their feedback on how we can make a national housing strategy work for all Ontarians. Housing and poverty advocates across Ontario have been telling us very clearly for some time that the status quo is not working. We need a strong national housing strategy with the flexibility to address the specific needs of the provinces and territories.

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In the coming weeks, I'll be sharing Ontario's feedback with Minister Duclos and my provincial and territorial counterparts. Central to that feedback will be the core vision of the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy: that every Ontarian have access to an affordable and suitable home, providing the foundation to secure employment, raise a family and build strong communities.

Mr. Speaker, we've outlined just some of the reforms today that we are proposing to improve access to affordable and stable housing for our citizens. Changing the housing system to make it work better for the people it's designed to serve is going to go a long way to help us meet our goals. When one family achieves housing sustainability, it creates room for others to do the same. With the right tools, we can build a housing sector in Ontario that leaves no one behind.

Our ultimate goal—increasing affordability and ending homelessness in Ontario—is a bold, long-term goal, and we will face many challenges along the way. But it is possible. It requires a system built on partnerships with the private and non-profit sectors and between all levels of government. We all have a shared purpose. By working together, we can start taking meaningful actions to transform Ontario's housing system and to end chronic homelessness by 2025.

This package of reforms we are proposing today will help to achieve this goal. I want to thank everyone who

spoke to us about how to make more affordable housing a reality.

I also want to leave my colleagues with one last thought. In November, I will visit London, Ontario, to attend the fourth National Conference on Ending Homelessness, hosted by the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. With the conference taking place in our home city, I know the words shared by the member for London North Centre at last year's conference will be top of mind for me.

During her remarks, the member and my predecessor as the minister responsible for the province's Poverty Reduction Strategy posed the following question: If home is where the heart is, where is the heart of the person experiencing homelessness? It is a question I hope all members of this Legislature remember as we sit in this place we call the House, considering this important legislation and those who have no place to call home. It is for them that I urge all members to vote for the passing of this landmark bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: Good morning, Speaker, and thank you. I want to thank Minister Ballard for giving me the opportunity to speak today.

In my work at Queen's Park, I have come to understand first-hand the need for all Ontarians to have access to affordable, stable and adequate housing in their community. This rings true across the province, but the issue of affordable housing and homelessness presents a special challenge in our urban centres.

In my riding of Trinity-Spadina, tackling homelessness continues to be a priority. I can think of many great organizations that have put their efforts into resolving this challenge for many, many years; for example, West Neighbourhood House. They have volunteers actually going out and visiting homeless individuals and helping them to see if there's any way they can leverage government programs or government funding, or if they can help them to file taxes—making sure they're tapping into those potential incomes. I think that is a very noble thing for them to do.

We are making great strides to combat chronic homelessness. As part of the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy update, our government just launched a consultation with stakeholders on potential amendments to the Residential Tenancies Act, to improve how the rules affect transitional housing programs.

Transitional housing provides a key role within the housing system. In addition to housing, it provides a mix of appropriate support services for vulnerable people to address specific needs; for example, people with mental health and addiction issues and survivors of domestic violence. It assists people to become more independent and able to transition to permanent, stable housing and independent living. This consultation supports Ontario's goal of ending homelessness and addresses concerns expressed by our transition housing providers, so that they may be able to better serve the needs of their clients.

As Minister Ballard mentioned, our government is also working hard to modernize the way we deliver social housing in this province. This is reflected in Bill 7, the Promoting Affordable Housing Act, with the proposed reforms to the Residential Tenancies Act and the Housing Services Act. The amendments would support vibrant, mixed-income communities and encourage a healthy mix of rent-geared-to-income and market rent tenants.

By recognizing new and innovative forms of municipal housing assistance and increasing local flexibility to manage housing assets, we would empower service managers to provide assistance in a way that best meets their diverse needs.

We also want to create better outcomes for tenants by ensuring that housing assistance meets their needs in a way that is more equitable, flexible and timely. When it comes to social housing, I can think of communities such as Alexandra Park and Portland Place in my neighbourhood. The volunteers and the staff do a great job to make everyone feel at home.

The proposed amendments to the Housing Services Act represent the first step in modernizing Ontario's social housing system to support economic and social inclusion for social housing tenants. These changes would provide municipalities with more flexibility in administering and delivering social housing, as well as require local enumeration to count people who are homeless in their communities, and we all know it's a very, very difficult task.

We hope that this will lead to more stability and security for service managers, as well as for social housing and not-for-profit co-operative housing providers.

Arcadia co-op, Cawthra Mansions—these are just the two that come to the top of my mind, which I visited during the summer. They, again, do a great job of providing a sense of community to all residents around.

Our amendments could also help to reduce the waitlists, as people would be able to find and apply for the housing and supports they need more quickly and easily.

Counting local homeless populations would provide valuable information about the diverse reality of Ontarians who experience homelessness, and inform smart approaches and program design.

Mr. Speaker, our proposed changes to the Residential Tenancies Act would also help to clarify the treatment of rent-geared-to-income tenants. More specifically, tenants could not be evicted when they cease to be eligible for rent-geared-to-income assistance after paying market rent for 12 months or more. This change would ensure that social housing tenants are not penalized due to the positive changes in their household incomes.

Other proposed changes to the RTA would bring all Ontario municipalities into alignment with respect to enforcing local residential rental maintenance standards. Most municipalities already do this either fully or partially, as they have their own property standard bylaws that include residential rental standards.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation we are proposing today would allow us to make great strides in transforming and

modernizing our social housing system. In giving municipalities more flexibility in administering social housing programs, we are accounting for local priorities and situations, because every community is unique and a one-size-fits-all approach does not work anymore. These measures, along with the other proposed amendments that Minister Ballard spoke about today, will enable us to make a big step forward to provide more affordable housing options and in our goal to end chronic homelessness in 10 years.

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Mr. Speaker, I join Minister Ballard in supporting Bill 7, and I urge all members of this House to vote for this bill and see the passage of this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's always a privilege to get up in this House for the residents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. Bill 7 is very interesting. We all know there's a homeless problem in the city. Now the government is trying to just download that onto the municipalities. Will the municipalities take that provincial responsibility on, without any funding? They are stretched now under this government. They've seen funding cut back from them. We need to give the option, of course, but there's no funding attached to this, and that concerns us.

Homelessness is escalating under this government. We see more and more people on the streets, and more and more people without help. A lot of the information seems to point to, in many cases, mental illness. We don't have any increases or help for people that are experiencing mental illness. When you look through most families in this province, they have somebody that has a connection with or who is suffering from some type of mental illness. In many cases, that leads to homelessness. They're unemployed. They can't find a job.

It's something that, in many cases, is very treatable with the right help. I had the opportunity to talk to a doctor from a nearby village in my area yesterday. She talked about the lack of funding and the lack of help. People that we see on the street actually could be very much helped, but this government refuses to fund those services.

We're hoping, of course, to support this bill. We have some amendments to go in to it. But there must be some money that goes along with this, or else we'll just see the price of housing go up for everybody, and of course that's not good for the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to begin the morning by answering the question that was just posed to us by the Minister of Housing and the minister responsible for poverty reduction. He said, "If home is where the heart is, where is the heart of" the homeless person? I'd like to inform the minister that the heart of the homeless person lies here within the NDP caucus: the party of the homeless, the impoverished, the downtrodden—the very people that successive Liberal and Conservative govern-

ments have ignored for the past 30 years. So you know where the heart is, Speaker, and it's over here.

The devil is in the details. That's why we're waiting for the details on this bill to come forward, because right now there's not a lot of information in there, not a lot of detail to speak about. I think that's why the minister, when he first stood up, spent his first 15 or 20 minutes talking about his night on the street. The self-described—what was he?—middle-aged, silver-haired minister and his buddy Bruce spent a night on the street.

He talked about a homeless shelter that has turned away 6,000 people, provided 80,000 meals and provided 28,000 nights of safety. I agree with that. I found it very interesting. I'm glad the minister took the opportunity to spend the night out in the snow as if he was homeless, because that gets to the heart of where we're headed with this bill in many ways. But until we get into the details—because this bill is so lacking in so much of the detail—it's going to be very difficult, until we get to committee and can put some flesh on the bones, if you will, of what is proposed here and find out exactly where we're going with inclusionary zoning, finally.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: I'm proud to offer a few comments in support of the good minister and his initiative, reintroducing this act, which has been a long time coming together. It has been a long and winding road that has led to this place. There have been a number of people advocating, including municipalities and members of this House, around some of the tools that need to be provided: inclusive zoning, a provision around granny suites, and requirements that the Minister of Housing, in his or her infinite wisdom, might decide to regulate.

The consultation with the industry is ongoing. It's very, very detailed. We want to get something in place that works. There's a long history in the housing area of things being suggested that either were never seriously considered or were considered and didn't work. That's one of the real joys that came about the expert panel that was put in place that the minister, I'm sure, has referenced and will reference: to get people with experience to make their comments so that the government can be guided appropriately.

Reference to the standing committee is appropriate. I think there is a lot of detailed work here. I think we'll want to hear from some of the various stakeholders in society, because it's only together that this is going to work, and work to the benefit of the people who need the assistance that the good minister and his great staff—I happen to know a few of them—are working so hard at trying to deliver.

I offer that up. I urge the members of this House to stand in solidarity with the minister and get this bill processed to the next step.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: In 2010, the government released an affordable housing strategy. In that strategy it

said, “The success of the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy will be measured using performance indicators” and reported annually. Six years later, we’ve not seen a single report. The only way we have to measure the effectiveness of their six years of their Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy is the wait-list and the additional 20,000 families who have been added since this strategy was launched. Now the government has released an updated version of the Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, resulting in this bill. Once again, it contains nice words, but I have concerns that it doesn’t truly address our housing crisis.

I wrote the minister before the updated Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy was released and asked him to include these measures or something equivalent. But there are no performance measures—just nice words in this bill. If we’re going to be able to measure, if we’re going to be able to help the homeless in this province, we need to keep track of what we’re doing. So far, since 2010, they have kept track of nothing, and it doesn’t appear, in this bill, that they want to do any better in the future. So I have some questions as to whether they are really going to accomplish what they said they’re going to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Housing has two minutes.

Hon. Chris Ballard: I’d like to thank specifically the members from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Windsor–Tecumseh, Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale and Oxford. I have heard their comments and made note of their comments. I think it’s important, on an issue such as homelessness and affordable housing, that we recognize that all of us in this House have a responsibility; that really this is an issue that resides in everyone’s house, no matter what side of the House we sit on.

I’d like to reiterate that I look forward to this bill moving to the committee stage so that we can have a more fulsome discussion and debate with members of the opposition and the third party and better understand what their concerns are so that we might be able to incorporate some of those appropriate changes into the final legislation. We look forward to that discussion going forward. I also look forward to taking this legislation out to the community and to our stakeholders, who have been so valuable in giving us our original input.

I will end by reiterating one of the many successes that this whole program has had. I’ll focus for a second on the success of our CHPI program. The assertion that nothing has been done could not be further from what reality tells us is the truth: 30,000 families lifted off the streets, and 100,000 at-risk households will never have to know homelessness because of that single program.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1010 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I’m pleased to welcome to the Legislature Dan Kelly and Dave Karn, from Dowler-Karn in the St. Thomas area. Welcome, guys.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: Today, I’d like to welcome representatives from the propane industry. They’re here for their advocacy day at Queen’s Park. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Norm Miller: I’m pleased to welcome Dominic Palladino from Superior Propane, Ian Appleton from Parkland Fuel and Phil Eddy from Sparlings Propane, whom I met with this morning. Welcome to the propane day here at Queen’s Park.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I’d like to welcome our guest Aymara Heath to the Legislature. She’s a friend of Andrew Forjione, who works in my office. She’s visiting from New Hampshire, so this is her first time in the Legislature. Welcome.

Mr. Lorne Coe: It’s my pleasure to introduce Tereasa Vaxvick and Matthew Vaxvick. They are the parents of page Nicole Vaxvick. Welcome. They’re in the members’ gallery.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I’m very pleased to welcome today friends from the Retired Teachers of Ontario who are here in recognition of international seniors’ day. We have with us David Kendall, their second vice-president; Rich Prophet from the executive; Jim Grieve, their executive director, who is no stranger to Queen’s Park; and Sylvia Link and Kimberly Brathwaite from their staff.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I would like to welcome some friends to the members’ gallery this morning: Clifford Pilon, Pamela Phillips, Cathy Landry and Larry Landry, my former executive assistant, who is now retired.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I would like to welcome a good friend of mine and former colleague from the Boston Consulting Group and now someone who’s a director of career services and alumni relations at the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto, Lauren Shanahan. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Todd Smith: I would like to welcome a couple of members of the Canadian Propane Association who I had an opportunity to meet with this morning: James Daniels and Terry Elligsen from Sparlings Propane. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I would just like to join the President of the Treasury Board in welcoming Ontario’s retired teachers. Thank you so much for being here today.

SHIMON PERES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to have a moment of silence on the passing of Shimon Peres.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Premier is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence. Do we agree? Agreed.

Could I have all members please stand for a moment of silence upon the death of Shimon Peres.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you for that tribute.

The member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton on a point of order.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Speaker, we seek unanimous consent for the immediate second and third reading passage of Bill 23, the Islamic Heritage Month Act, 2016, in time for Islamic Heritage Month, October 2016.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy leader is seeking unanimous consent for second and third reading passage of the bill. Do we agree? I heard a no.

BRITISH HOME CHILD DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order, Speaker: I'd like to recognize that today is the fifth anniversary of British Home Child Day in Ontario. The bill proclaiming September 28 as British Home Child Day was introduced by former Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry MPP Jim Brownell. I was honoured to co-sponsor the bill with the member for Parkdale—High Park.

I encourage all members and Ontarians to take a moment today to remember the 100,000 home children who came to Canada between 1869 and the 1940s. They overcame tremendous hardships, and today we recognize and honour their contributions to Ontario.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. On September 22, the Premier of Ontario told Evan Solomon that skyrocketing hydro costs were "worth it." Is it worth it that this government forces people to choose between heating and eating? Is it worth it that there are 567,000 households that are behind in their hydro bills? Can the Premier tell the families who can't put food on the table that these prices, using her words, are worth it? Can she say it is worth it for people to have to sell their homes? Can she really tell the people of Ontario that this mess she has created is worth it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I can say to the Leader of the Opposition is that it is absolutely imperative that we make sure that people have the supports that they need so that they can pay their electricity bills. The changes that we are making to make sure that there is, for example, the Ontario energy support program in place, the removal of the debt retirement charge from bills, and

the changes that we've made most recently that we announced in the throne speech—the removal of the provincial portion of the HST, the additional 12% that means that rural and northern communities have access to 20% reduction: All of those were an acknowledgement of the fact that the improvements that we've made in the system, the fact that we have invested in the system, has a cost associated with it. We understand that we need to help people to deal with those costs every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier: I'm bewildered when the Premier talks about improvements because no one in the province of Ontario has seen improvements.

I was recently in Kakabeka Falls in northwestern Ontario, and I stopped by Odena Foods. I chatted with the owner there, and he had a question for the Liberal government that he asked if I could ask the Premier directly. As a small business owner in northern Ontario, he wanted to know how he is expected to pay his hydro bill and staff with \$13,000 as his monthly bill. Are those hydro bills worth it if a business is struggling to meet their payroll? There is a question of whether he can continue to actually keep his staff for a local business that was previously successful.

My question to the Premier: Is her hydro mess worth it if it means that businesses are going to have to close?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's exactly why we are expanding the ICI program: so that smaller businesses can take advantage of the opportunity to reduce their electricity bills by up to 34%. I know that the Minister of Energy is going to want to give the member opposite some examples of businesses in the next supplementary. That is precisely why we're expanding that conservation initiative, the industrial conservation initiative—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm receiving signals that we want to continue going down the road that I didn't want to go and I will. This will be my last—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't need your help either. This will be the last time I have to talk about warnings; I'll just introduce them right away.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's why we're expanding that program. Is it worth it to kids who have asthma to have clean air because we shut the coal-fired plants? Is it worth it to communities that have unreliable energy to now—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm now moving to warnings. The member from Prince Edward—Hastings is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —because we invested in more than 10,000 kilometres of line that they have reliable power? Yes, it's worth it to have no smog days and to have a system that is 90% clean and has been rebuilt. It's worth it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

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Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Premier: What we hear in the government's talking points is "reliable power." That's their defence for having this extraordinary disaster of an energy policy. So let's talk about their defence. Let's talk about reliable power. All you have to do is look next door to Quebec. In 2015, Quebec had three power outages that were a result —

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please stop the clock. The Minister of Housing is warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Quebec had three power outages that were a result of either faulty equipment or human error; Ontario had 32. Total outages in Ontario equalled 11.5 days; in Quebec, it was only six and a half hours. Ontario has had as many outages as BC, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Alberta combined. We don't have reliable power in the province of Ontario; we have the opposite. Our hydro system is both unaffordable and unreliable.

A direct question to the Premier: How dare you say we have reliable power in the province of Ontario? You have created a mess. Why won't you apologize to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise and answer the Leader of the Opposition's question because perhaps the Leader of the Opposition should not be so quick to choose who he compares our province to, Mr. Speaker. He claims that Quebec hardly experienced an outage at all last year but just two nights ago, 150,000 residents of Gatineau lost their power during rush hour. The outage was triggered by a substation transmission failure.

It seems that Ontario and Quebec are not immune to occasional, unforeseen events, and luckily we have the hard-working power workers' unions that work in both of our provinces to quickly remedy these outages. I know the opposition has begun to make these truly bizarre claims about dump trucks hitting poles and weather knocking down wires. I'd like to hear the plan from the Leader of the Opposition for how he can control car accidents and the weather, because he has no plan for anything else. He must have a plan for that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. You're on W, by the way.

New question.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. The Premier's Minister of Energy said yesterday that this government has "been tasked to find ways to bring bills down." The minister said he is going to save families \$2.45 by cancelling the next round of renewable contracts. But, in fact, he is not saving them a cent. He's just not going to raise prices. The definition of a saving is a

reduction. No one is saving anything. Did I save \$25,000 this morning by not going out and buying a car? That's not how savings work. The government's logic is completely faulty.

Will the Premier come clean? Will she admit that this latest PR stunt won't save families a cent?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, we inherited an electricity system that had been badly neglected under the previous government. Families and businesses across Ontario couldn't count on the electricity system. It was dirty. We shut down the coal-fired plants. It is 90% clean, renewable energy now. By the elimination of coal, we've avoided about \$4 billion in health care and related costs. I think that kind of savings—that is direct savings to the people of the province.

Mr. Speaker, we've put in place initiatives to help people to deal with their bills, whether it's the Ontario energy support program, whether it's the removal of the provincial portion of the HST, whether it's the removal of the debt retirement charge. All of those are initiatives that will help people and businesses deal with their bills. We're further moving to take costs out of the system that will mean there will be future cost avoidance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Back to the Premier. Don't get me wrong, Mr. Speaker. I do applaud the government for finally realizing these renewable contracts that they signed were reckless and not in the best interests of Ontario. But the question is, why did it take so long for this government to realize it? Is it because they milked 30 of these renewable energy companies for over \$1.3 million in donations to the Ontario Liberal Party? It is clear these contracts were never what was in the best interest of Ontario. It was all about what's in the best interest of Liberal coffers.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is: Now that the Premier has acknowledged these renewable contracts for energy we couldn't use—had to give it away to Pennsylvania, New York and Michigan—now that she has acknowledged that was a mistake, will the Premier consider apologizing to the people of Ontario and giving back the \$1.3 million they took from these companies, and help families out with their hydro bills?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I find it reckless that we have a party talking about energy with no plan. I want you to think, Mr. Speaker, that just a few years ago we had to send warnings out to let people know that if they went outside, they would have difficulty breathing. The simple act of breathing was difficult. But we've got a party on the other side that doesn't want to invest in that. They left a crumbling system for us to pick up.

The 2013 long-term energy plan had forecasted some costs, and we made sure that we're removing those costs.

They may ridicule \$2.45, but for families that is important. I will find 50 cents or \$50 to make sure that we

continue to help families—not just sit there and make up mistakes.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to ask the Premier this question again. I hope this time I can get an answer, not passing the buck.

The reality is, the government has acknowledged that these contracts were reckless and unnecessary. The government has admitted that mistake.

Given the fact that the Liberal Party has received \$1.3 million in donations because of these contracts that were a mistake, and also given the fact that the Auditor General has said that we are going to overpay by—hear this—\$9.2 billion because of these contracts the government has now acknowledged were a mistake—\$9.2 billion, Ontario was going to overpay; the Liberal Party gets \$1.3 million—my direct question to the Premier, and I hope she will answer it: Will she apologize to the people of Ontario for taking \$1.3 million into the Ontario Liberal Party and causing Ontario to overpay on hydro by \$9.2 billion?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: In terms of renewable energy, our government is very proud of the electricity mix that we have in this province: 18,000 megawatts of renewables contracted or online. Ontario ranks first in Canada for installed wind capacity. More than 40% is wind.

When we're talking about fundraising, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Just to remind everybody, the warnings are still on the table. If you get a warning, the next one is out.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm still standing, so therefore some people making comments on the government side are not helpful when I'm asking them to come to order. Everyone come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I hope I have enough time to rhyme off the long list of the events that the Leader of the Opposition has done in fundraising over the last little while. At the Albany Club: \$10,000 per person. Guests with the PC health critic: that's \$500. At the Metro Toronto Convention Centre—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Come to order, please. Start the clock.

New question.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. For three days, New Democrats have asked a very simple question and have yet to receive a clear answer. Is the

Premier planning on helping the sale of Toronto Hydro? Yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the member opposite wants to speak about Toronto Hydro, he will have to speak to the mayor of Toronto and the councillors on the city of Toronto council.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Just over two years ago, our leader, Andrea Horwath, asked the Premier about the sell-off of Hydro One. Now, the Premier said, "It must actually be very hard for the leader of the third party to ask these questions. She knows that we're not selling off the assets." Of course, Ontarians all know that all the while the Premier was in fact working on the sell-off of Hydro One.

So now it's very understandable that people are concerned about the next moves. The Premier is leaving the door wide open to selling off municipal hydro utilities, and people are worried that yet again the Premier is not telling people what's actually going to happen. Does the Premier understand how people are worried that she is planning to help the sale of more of our hydro system?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Only city council can make that decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Infrastructure is warned.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just repeat that if the member opposite wants to speak about the city of Toronto or other municipalities, he is going to have to talk to the elected officials in those communities. That's the way it works.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, we all know, and the Premier ought to know, that the province has a large role in this. They can actually assist or not assist in the sale of local utilities. So New Democrats are again asking a very simple question: Is the Premier hoping to distract from her decision to sell off Hydro One by helping to privatize local utilities like Toronto Hydro?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that there are other municipalities in Ontario that have made decisions like this. They have done that on their own, and if the member opposite wants to talk with a municipality about their decisions around electricity, he will have to go to their mayors and their councils and have that conversation.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is again to the Premier. It's déjà vu all over again in Ontario. In October 2014, people wanted to know if the Liberals were going to privatize Hydro One. After all, privatizing Hydro One was something that they didn't run on; it wasn't something that they mentioned in their campaign. But the government wouldn't give a straight answer.

Fast-forward to today, and Ontarians saw a throne speech that didn't say a word about the Liberal provincial government assisting local utilities in privatizing. Now, Liberal insiders are saying that selling Toronto Hydro "is a good idea and Queen's Park is interested in helping make it happen." Just like in 2014, the Premier is dodging this very simple question. Will the Premier be honest with the people of Ontario? Are the Liberals planning to privatize more local utilities? Yes or no?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let me just say to the member opposite that I'm being very honest with him, this Legislature and the people of Ontario. Those decisions are decisions that local councils have to make, as has happened in other parts of the province where local councils have made decisions around their distribution companies. The local communities are going to need to make those decisions.

If the member opposite wants to talk about the building of transit and transportation infrastructure in the province, and how there is a build going on across the province, whether it's roads and bridges or whether it's transit all across our urban centres, I'm happy to talk about that, because we know how important it is that we make those investments, that we create those jobs in the immediate term and foster the economic development going forward. If the member opposite wants to talk about that, I'm happy to talk about that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Local municipalities will certainly make decisions, but those decisions will be influenced if they know that the provincial government wants to assist them in privatizing those utilities, so that's why the question is here.

Two years ago, the Premier denied that she was privatizing Hydro One. Today, the Premier isn't denying that she's planning to help the municipalities sell local hydro utilities. Ontarians are worried. They've been let down by the Liberals before and they're worried that they're going to be let down yet again. Will the Premier just clear the air once and for all and tell Ontarians: Is she going to help privatize municipal hydro utilities like Toronto Hydro and the many others around this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very honoured to be able to stand and answer the member's question relating to Toronto Hydro. That is totally a decision for Toronto city council. I know the other member is contemplating running for other offices, so if he's interested, he may want to consider running for Toronto city council and he can be part of that decision.

But until that time, let's talk about Hydro One. Every dollar realized from our current assets will be reinvested in Ontario's infrastructure. This sale will support the single largest infrastructure investment in Ontario's history. I was very proud to be able to announce in North Bay, in Kapuskasing and in my own riding of Sudbury \$20 million for infrastructure investments that are truly needed by many of these municipalities. I'm looking forward to making more of those announcements.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Yesterday's FAO report shows that Ontario is on the brink. Particularly, low-income people and people in northern and rural Ontario are paying more and more for energy. People will be pushed over the edge with the further privatization of Hydro One. Privatizing local municipal hydro utilities will only make it worse. These are real people who can't pay their bills. More than half a million Ontarians are in arrears.

Will the Premier start listening to the people of this province, take action and commit to no more sell-off of our public assets and public hydro utilities?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I thank the member for the question because it's another opportunity for me to be able to stand up and say, you know what? We've also heard that from the FAO, but we've heard it from the people of Ontario, and that's why we acted. We brought forward our three-point plan with a specific piece in there for 20% for northerners and rural folks, to make sure that they can get that 20% reduction on the bill.

The unfortunate thing is that when we tried to get this bill passed quickly—because we still have a lot of work to do to make sure that we can get the LDCs in place—the opposition voted against our unanimous consent to make sure that we can get this through quickly.

And speaking of the FAO, the FAO confirmed that the average Ontario household spends less on electricity than every other province except BC. But we still know that some families are having difficulty. That's why we brought this program forward. That's why we have six other programs in place: the OESP, the LEAP—Mr. Speaker, we have so many I don't have enough time to rhyme them all off.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Every day, we read about the opioid crisis and how it is killing someone in Ontario every 14 hours. Western provinces have already created a system to track these overdoses, finding real-time data for the fentanyl crisis. They utilize the data to deal with this drug crisis. However, Ontario is unable to track in real time, and the data they are using currently is from 2014.

When will the minister put in place a system to track the overdoses and deal with the opioid crisis that's killing Ontarians every day?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. The fact is that Ontario does have an automated real-time system existing in, I think, 118 hospitals across the province—and we're actually expanding that to include all of the hospitals—which, based on triage, provides us, in real time, automatically to the ministry and to public health officers if they want to access that data, all data on overdoses, including overdoses that are due specifically to opioids.

Now, when it comes to opioid deaths or overdose deaths, it is slightly more complicated, and I'm happy to

address that in the supplementary. But I want to reassure Ontarians that, in fact, we didn't need to take the measure that BC did because we already had in place an automated real-time process through triage at hospital ERs that provides the ministry immediately with that data with regard to overdoses in the majority of hospitals in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Back to the minister: It's interesting that the Premier contradicted the minister's claims when speaking to Global News's Alan Carter. She said that Ontario does not have the data the minister claims to have and that they should actually appoint someone to look into the problem. Even the Premier doesn't believe the minister's claims.

Health professionals and law enforcement need the tools to deal with the fentanyl crisis. When will the government get its act together and come up with a plan to deal with this opioid crisis?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: You were standing right there.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Yes, I was standing about two feet away from the Premier when she did address this with Alan Carter, and that certainly isn't my recollection of what she did say.

When it comes to overdose deaths, it is important that Ontarians understand that there is a process in place. Those deaths which are suspected as well of being the result of a narcotic overdose have to be referred to the coroner of Ontario, and the coroner is required, or has the opportunity if he feels that it's merited, to actually undertake a death investigation.

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I hope the member appreciates that there is a time required to undertake that death investigation to determine if that overdose is due to a narcotic overdose and to a specific type of narcotic, whether it's opioid or other. That process does take a little bit longer; however, we are working with the coroner and many others. I hope to have more to say shortly on this in terms of further improving the system that's in place.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. We expect the Conservatives to attack renewable energy. It's not what people expect from the Liberals, and they have every reason to be disappointed. Bills aren't increasing because energy is renewable. At heart, it's because we're privatizing the energy system. But instead of fixing the problem, instead of admitting that they've made a mess because of privatization, the Liberals are turning their backs on renewable energy. Why are the Liberals abandoning renewable energy and defending privatized energy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'm very pleased to rise and answer the question from the honourable member. It's very important for me to continue to emphasize that we

have 18,000 megawatts of renewables already contracted or online. As I mentioned, we rank first in Canada when it comes to installed wind capacity. More than 40% of all wind and all existing clean energy contracts will be honoured. Since 2003, green energy has invested billions of dollars from private sector investments, creating over 42,000 jobs,

Let's not forget that 90% of our electricity system is emissions-free, and we haven't stopped yet. We still have the FIT program and we still have the microFIT program, and we're bringing forward net metering to continue with renewables in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm not surprised the Premier doesn't want to answer this question, because her approach is directly contrary to the way she represents herself to the people of this province.

The core reason that hydro bills keep going up is privatization. But instead of stopping the sell-off of Hydro One or shutting down the process of helping local distribution companies sell off their utilities, instead of focusing on ensuring that renewable energy is publicly owned and affordable, the government is abandoning renewables.

Can the Premier explain why she's defending privatization and abandoning renewable power?

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: No one is abandoning anything. We're actually continuing to invest in more. I think the important thing for us to say is that we're committed to renewable energy and we've built a strong track record that demonstrates many of our successes.

As I said before and I'll continue to say, it's something we should all be proud of in this province: 90% emissions-free. Our electricity system is generated by a diverse supply of generation sources, including wind, solar, nuclear and hydroelectricity. I got to go up and see the Lower Mattagami: 450 megawatts of power coming from hydroelectricity.

Renewables are an important element of our government's plan to close all of our coal plants. We are the first jurisdiction in North America to make sure that we do not have any coal-fired electricity generation, making it healthier for everyone in this province.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Ms. Daiene Vernile: My question is for the Minister of Research, Innovation and Science.

Minister, I understand that you recently were at Princess Margaret hospital to announce a new round of funding for the Ontario Research Fund.

Support for this sector is creating tangible benefits for the people of Ontario. We're seeing this every day in hospitals right across the province. Some of these breakthroughs have the added benefit of creating more effective and efficient treatment options so that the money we are saving can be reinvested into research for life-saving advancements.

Minister, I know that people in my riding of Kitchener Centre, where we are an innovation leader, want to know

that we're continuing to introduce cutting-edge medical procedures which are putting us at the forefront of medical research in North America. Could the minister please tell us more about some recent advancements that were made possible through the Ontario Research Fund?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Kitchener Centre for her advocacy for research and innovation across the province of Ontario, particularly in the Kitchener-Waterloo region.

I recently had the pleasure of attending Princess Margaret hospital to award a total of \$51 million to support world-class studies and research talents at leading institutions across our province of Ontario.

Thanks to the funding that this government provides for medical research, our scientists are always on the brink of new and exciting advancements. For example, the Ontario Research Fund helped scientists at Sunnybrook hospital develop high-intensity ultrasound technology that can be used in the treatment of uterine fibroids. This discovery will save Ontario hospitals \$35 million annually.

Other discoveries made through this same program have helped scientists discover that bone tumours can also be treated using high-intensity ultrasound.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that last year, Sunnybrook scientists were able to breach the blood-brain barrier and deliver—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I want to thank the minister for his answer.

Minister, investing in research excellence and supporting the people who are driving our innovative economy is key to developing medical technology that is saving lives and making our health care system more efficient. In my community, I know it's providing hundreds of jobs.

We know that this part is much bigger, though. There's a bigger plan to bring health benefits to the people of Ontario and position us as a continued economic leader. The difference between thriving and merely surviving in this very competitive global economy is the priority that we're placing on medical and scientific research.

Minister, could you please share with the members of this House some of the recent examples that demonstrate advances as a result of investing in the Ontario Research Fund?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, thank you to the member from Kitchener Centre for the question.

Mr. Speaker, our government is dedicated to making sure that Ontario is a global leader in medical sciences. Our investments in the Ontario Research Fund have recently yielded significant advances. For example, at the Ottawa Hospital, Dr. Duncan Stewart discovered that stem cells are able to treat septic shock, a condition with a high fatality rate.

Investments in the Ontario Research Fund also helped Dr. Michael Rudnicki discover that Duchenne muscular

dystrophy is a disease that affects stem cells, not muscle fibres. This breakthrough discovery will help us save people who suffer from the debilitating disease.

Investments in the Ontario Research Fund have tangible benefits to Ontarians, and that is why our government, under Premier Kathleen Wynne, will continue to invest in this fund.

HOME CARE

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Sarah Patterson and Jordan Yolkowskie love their eight-month-old daughter, Everley, and they want her home. Everley needs 24-hour care but doctors at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario supported her coming home. But the South East Community Care Access Centre is missing in action. For four weeks, they've delayed funding, forcing Sarah and Jordan to pay \$300 a day for care—now over \$10,000 and counting.

Monday, the CCAC presented a woefully inadequate plan and shockingly said, "Take it or leave it." These parents won't sign it, and I support them standing up to this heartless action. It will cost 10 times more to care for Everley at CHEO and it will tear this family apart.

Baby Everley belongs at home, Speaker. Will the minister join me and tell the CCAC to do its job and keep her there?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I can't imagine what the parents of this tiny baby are going through right now. I am familiar with the situation, and I certainly do commit to doing what I can to ensure that that family and that young child is able to get the resources that she needs to support her in her young life.

But we have made and we are making important changes that do enable this kind of flexibility and this kind of support. We've eliminated the nursing maximums that are able to be provided through home and community care, through our CCACs, for those most complex patients.

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We recently announced more than a million additional hours of PSW support services through our CCACs and other changes that we're making to hopefully be able to provide this kind of flexibility and assistance. I certainly commit to working with the member opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: The government and the CCACs' self-managed care model forces families to set up a small business. They must get WSIB and \$2 million in liability insurance, pay taxes on the funding and even hire an accountant. It's ridiculous, but Everley's parents will jump through the hoops. They just want, in Sarah's words, "something that's fair and manageable, so we can live life." They're surviving now but only because of incredible community support. That's what Ontario's health care system has come to: families relying on bake sales and coin cans at gas stations. Sarah and Jordan are exhausted, and they're run-

ning out of money. And the CCAC? It couldn't be doing less.

So, you know what? I'm just going to ask the minister: Please, pick up a phone and call the CCAC. Tell them to get their act together.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I have no doubt that ministry officials are working with the CCAC and with CHEO as well. I hope the member can appreciate that there are a small number of high complex cases across the province. This, I think he would agree, is one of them. We need to make sure that we're doing everything we can to provide the appropriate health care and medical support to individuals.

I wish the member opposite had come to me specifically to enlist my support. It's unfortunate that he has to raise it in this context. We are working on this case, and I commit to the family that we will do everything possible.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: People in my community of London continue to experience higher rates of unemployment than elsewhere in the province. For Londoners who do have jobs, many still struggle to make ends meet. Their hydro bills are too high. They can't afford child care. Even people who finished college or university years ago are struggling with student debt.

Speaker, the city of London had a great idea, to become a living-wage city—\$15 an hour. It's about doing better so that more people can have hope and opportunities. Will the Premier follow London's and Alberta's lead and increase the minimum wage to \$15 an hour?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member for this question.

When you look at examples around all of North America of how governments have treated this issue, I think we should be especially proud of what we've been able to do in the province of Ontario to bring in a system that's predictable and that's stable. It was given to us on the advice of poverty advocates, people from organized labour and people from the business community.

I think we've become an example of how it's done. We're about halfway through a five-year period before we take another look at it. We've got one of the highest minimum wages in the country. Businesses know when it's coming in; they can plan for it. And those people that are working at the minimum-wage level, know that they're going to get a predictable wage increase from time to time—every year, actually, not from time to time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Londoners read this week that one of our own local employers pledged to increase his employee's wages to \$15, and it literally changed her life.

Living on minimum wage is a reality for twice as many Ontarians now as when this government came to power. Ontarians deserve good jobs. They should be able to build a life, and a minimum wage is an important start.

Will the Premier commit today to raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks to the member for the supplementary.

Speaker, you have to go back to a time between 1996 and 2003; Ontario didn't increase its minimum wage once. People who were working at that level simply saw no increases at that time. We know who was in power then.

What we did is that we were obligated as a government to look at this in an organized way, in a way that was predictable and in a way that was stable. We came up with a system that I think other provinces, other states, are looking at around the world. I think it's a predictable way of doing things, but it also, as I said earlier, allows that every five years, you take a review. What has that led to? People at the minimum-wage level in the province of Ontario have earned more than in any other jurisdiction in this country over the past few years. They'll continue to get regular increases.

I bring this up once again: When the opportunity was there to provide advice, the NDP made not one single submission to that group.

NORTH AMERICAN INDIGENOUS GAMES

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: This question is for the Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation. I understand that next summer Ontario will host the 2017 North American Indigenous Games right here in Toronto. These games will welcome up to 10,000 indigenous people from all across North America to the traditional territories of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, the Huron-Wendat Nation, the Six Nations of the Grand River and the Métis Nation of Ontario. The games sound like a wonderful opportunity to highlight the accomplishments of indigenous athletes, especially those from Ontario. Can the minister tell us how our government is supporting the 2017 North American Indigenous Games?

Hon. David Zimmer: I want to thank the member for Barrie for that question. Yes, next summer we are prepared to welcome over 5,000 indigenous athletes to Ontario to compete in 14 different sports. This is the first time that Ontario has hosted the games. To bring the games to Ontario, our government is investing \$3.5 million over three years to support the Aboriginal Sport and Wellness Council of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. David Zimmer: A few weeks ago, I was in Hamilton for the announcement of a major partnership between the city of Hamilton and McMaster University to support these games through a new western hub. I was also at a similar event at York University in the city of Toronto earlier this year. I am confident that the 2017 North American Indigenous Games here in Ontario will be the best games ever.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'm excited to hear that our government is supporting this great initiative to showcase indigenous sport and bring the games to Ontario. This is also a wonderful opportunity to take advantage of the exceptional sports facilities, infrastructure and programs that are a lasting legacy of the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games.

We know that sport is empowering for both indigenous and non-indigenous youth and that participation in sport gives them self-confidence and resiliency and generates pride. Can the minister tell us how our investments in the 2017 North American Indigenous Games will benefit indigenous youth and athletes in Ontario?

Hon. David Zimmer: Again I thank the member for Barrie for her interest in these games.

Our investment in the games will support the development of indigenous athletes, coaches and mentors. It will build a brighter future for indigenous youth in Ontario.

Sport has the power to heal and to improve the quality of life for indigenous youth. It encourages emotional, spiritual and physical strength. That's why five of the recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation report involve sport, including support for these games. For young people, sport has the power to heal and to improve the quality of their lives. It encourages emotional and physical growth, confidence and ambition. We are looking forward to all of the broad benefits that these games can bring to Ontario and to indigenous peoples.

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I'm hearing first-hand accounts from personal support workers about the precarious working and living conditions at some long-term-care homes, such as how, on some shifts, one PSW is expected to look after 30 or 40 frail and sick residents—an impossible if not dangerous task.

As Ontario is facing a double demand for personal support workers, there can be no greater priority than improving our PSW workforce so that our seniors can enjoy safety and comfort in the care they receive. Knowing this, why has this minister not prioritized providing that job stability and consistency to Ontario's 100,000 personal support workers?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would disagree. We're doing a great deal for our PSWs across the province. In fact, we were the government that instituted and implemented a minimum wage for our PSWs. We've also increased hourly support to our PSWs, the funds that flow through the LHINs directly down to the PSWs, a \$4 increase over the past several years to the wages they are receiving.

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We're also working with our PSWs on a long-term strategy, not only to elevate the profession of these essential health care workers who are working so hard, diligently and compassionately throughout our health

care system, including in our long-term-care homes, but working with them, we've developed a standardized curriculum which is now in place. We're working with them in terms of issues of regulation and professional abilities to make sure that our PSWs are able to practise to the full scope of their ability.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Back to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: The minister has to take responsibility for the continued lack of standardized training and regulation of PSWs in Ontario. Instead of looking to the leadership of other provinces like Nova Scotia and British Columbia, who managed to put the safeguards in place and define their PSW standards, this government wasted 13 years and squandered \$5 million on a defunct PSW registry. I say, Minister, that the ball is in your court. When will you give the PSWs the plan they so desperately need so that they can do their job?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We are developing those standards. We have a standardized curriculum for PSWs. We're responding to what we're hearing from PSWs, the associations that represent them and the organized labour that represents them, as well, and we're working very hard to make sure that we're putting in place—guided by them and their good advice—the measures, supports, training and financial supports to enable them. In fact, we're providing many of them with financial support to upgrade their training.

There is a whole set of issues, and regulation is certainly one of them where we're engaging the sector very vigorously to determine how, on a go-forward basis, we can continue to respect and acknowledge and improve the delivery of services that our PSWs offer. That work will never be complete, but I think we have to acknowledge there have been important gains made for this important sector within health care, and we will continue to make further gains.

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. The throne speech said personal support workers are getting the pay hike they were promised, but the Ontario Personal Support Worker Association, representing 21,000 members, says that is "incorrect and misleading." In fact, according to the Toronto Star, thousands of PSWs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member cannot do indirectly what she cannot do directly. You will withdraw.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Please finish your question.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The Toronto Star says that thousands of PSWs have seen their weekly incomes go down. Can the minister tell us exactly how many PSWs have seen their paycheque go down, and if not, why not?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It's ironic because both of the opposition parties voted against the increase in wage for our PSWs, what has amounted to—

Interjections.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We're hearing the heckling from them now, but the reality is, it was this side of the House that implemented a \$4-an-hour increase to our PSWs who were some of the most vulnerable members of our society, let alone in the health care sector. They deserve that increase. We provided it to them; you did not. So we are working with our PSWs, and those are funds that flow through directly and all the way down to the PSWs in terms of increases.

We're also working with all of our health care providers in the home and community sector to standardize the contracts so we will be ensuring that, even more, the supports are there for our PSWs.

If we look in long-term care as well, we've added 2,500 more PSWs in long-term-care homes since 2008.

We're working with the sector. We're taking their advice. We're making great progress.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The question was: How many PSWs saw their paycheque go down? I can tell you, Speaker, that it is thousands of them who have seen their weekly income fall, not rise. They are seeing their times with their clients being cut, sometimes down to 15 minutes.

People are getting less home care, not more, and it's not just me saying this; we're hearing it from the PSWs on the front lines. We're hearing it from the Ontario Personal Support Worker Association, as well as being reported in the Toronto Star, the Ottawa Citizen and other papers.

When will this government step up, stop cutting the hours of care that families need and make sure that every PSW sees the full wage increases that were promised to them for every hour that they work?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Here's what we're hearing from PSWs across the country: that they appreciate the wage increase and they appreciate the attention that the Liberal government has been providing to them—in the complete absence of any leadership, I should add, from either of the opposition—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Many PSWs have said to me that they have never experienced a government that has acknowledged the importance of their contribution to the health care sector in this province ever—not the NDP, not the Conservatives. Both voted against any wage increase for PSWs.

Interjection: Shameful.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It is shameful. And they stand up now talking about those who perhaps may be affected by this policy. She doesn't talk about the tens of thousands of PSWs who have moved into a position where they can actually earn a wage which is worthy and responsive to the talent that they bring every single day.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you. Start the clock.

New question.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. When I travel throughout my riding, whether it's in the north or in the south, I see many new condo developments. Actually, there are many new condo developments across the entire city. Many of my constituents live in condos and that number continues to grow as developments are built in my riding. My Davenport office is regularly asked about what our government is doing to protect condo owners, a question that is not only important to condo owners in Davenport but to all condo owners across Ontario.

Currently there are 1.6 million people, or one in 10 Ontarians who are living in condos. Just last year, many of my constituents were pleased to see that new legislation was passed providing greater protections for condo owners in Ontario.

Can the minister please inform the House on how the Protecting Condominium Owners Act is modernizing condo law in our province?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: I want to say thank you to the member from Davenport for her question, but mainly for her advocacy on condo laws. Congratulations.

Our government is committed to modernizing our condo laws. We are doing so by ensuring that the condo industry will become more transparent and accountable. My ministry is establishing a condo authority that will provide owners and boards with quicker, lower-cost and less stressful dispute resolution. The act will also strengthen financial management rules for condo corporations to help prevent mismanagement. We will also establish a second authority that will licence condo managers to help provide further protections to owners and their homes.

I'm very confident that condo owners will have greater peace of mind knowing that they are protected after making such a large investment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Minister, for your response. I'm very appreciative of your ministry's efforts to protect consumers in Davenport and across this province.

The minister mentioned the creation of two new delegated administrative authorities. One of these authorities will protect condo owners and boards with a modern and efficient dispute resolution system. The other will license condo managers and ensure their ability to effectively manage these organizations.

Can the minister speak to the creation of these new delegated administrative authorities and how they ensure greater accountability and transparency within the industry?

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Thank you again to the member for Davenport for her question.

The creation of those two delegated administrative authorities will prove to be crucial in establishing greater accountability in the condo sector. These authorities will be self-funded, not-for-profit corporations that collect fees from their regulated industries.

1130

Combining these transparency measures and increasing owners' access to dispute resolution—condo owners will develop positive and mutually respectful relationships with their boards.

Our government is taking concrete steps to ensure that the condo industry is fair to owners and all those involved.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Michael Harris: A question to the Premier: Premier, when I asked the transport minister this spring about significant delays in LRV delivery for the Eglinton Crosstown and Waterloo ION, I was of course brushed off. Since then, it's become clear that this government has completely dropped the ball on vital LRT projects, leaving commuters waiting for the train. There were indications last year that Bombardier was struggling to deliver on the Metrolinx contract for 182 LRVs, followed by a series of warning flags that the government failed to heed.

Today, we learned that the Premier has finally opened her eyes to alternatives, allowing competitors for the Finch West LRT to include vehicle procurement in their bids—vehicles that were to be delivered by Bombardier.

Waterloo's LRT launch is only a year away, and now we have an eleventh-hour bid opening to replace trains that we've already paid for.

Will the Premier tell us why she has failed to ensure that her \$770-million train deal will actually put trains on the tracks?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to respond to this on behalf of the Minister of Transportation. I can tell you that it's not the Premier and it's not the government that make these decisions. It's Metrolinx, and it's part of the process as they go through and procure this work. We respect their process. We respect what they're doing.

At the same time, we recognize that Bombardier is a company that employs thousands of Ontarians here in this province. Bombardier is a company as well that has done very well by this province and done very well by this country. It competes globally. It's a global company. It's one that has had challenges of late, but we're quite confident they'll continue to resolve those challenges and continue to be a globally competitive company in the future. I would think that the member opposite would not want to downgrade the importance of Bombardier in our economy.

At the same time, we respect what Metrolinx is doing and the process they're going through to ensure they get the best value for the people of this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the Premier: It's important that this government provide critical oversight for such a large infrastructure project here in the province. In fact, it was the Liberal government that negotiated the terms, and now delays are running right through the entire \$770-million, 182-car deal. The testing vehicle for the Eglinton Crosstown light rail line was supposed to arrive in 2014, and then it was in the spring of 2015. Today we wonder if it's ever coming.

In Waterloo, there is growing concern that when the operator, GrandLinx, is ready to launch and meet its contractual obligations, there will be no trains on the tracks. Once the track is laid, the clock soon starts ticking on contracted operational costs. What commitment can the Premier provide to ensure that Waterloo residents, who have already paid \$92 million through the Metrolinx contract, won't also be paying for a train service with no trains in the station?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me respond to that by comparing our commitment to the commitment of the party opposite. We are committed to building public transit. We're making the challenging decisions, including broadening the ownership of Hydro One to invest in these very important projects.

Your leader and your party are nowhere when it comes to infrastructure investments. You're running and hiding on the opportunity to create more revenues to put into infrastructure. We're investing \$160 billion over the next 12 years in infrastructure, with absolutely no support from your party whatsoever.

Everything we're doing, we're doing because of the important decisions that we're making. We would like a little support from the members opposite—rather than trying to criticize every little detail along the way.

RING OF FIRE

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier. People are worried about whether there will be a future for the next generation in northern Ontario. The Ring of Fire can create good jobs and good lives for people in northern Ontario. The throne speech, once again, had nothing but a brief mention about the Ring of Fire development, even though the Canadian Chamber of Commerce has asked that it be declared a national priority.

People in northern Ontario have been let down over and over again by this Wynne Liberal government. They are struggling to pay their hydro bills. They deserve good-paying jobs and not more promises.

When will this government act and develop the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to answer the question from the member on this particular topic, on behalf of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The member references, in his words, the lack of a reference to this particular project in the throne speech, but what I can say back to the member is that I remember very clearly the

commitments that were made in the 2014 election platform around the Ring of Fire and the \$1 billion that we have attached for this particular project when it begins to move forward. You know what I remember? When the leaders' debate was in Thunder Bay—and your leader was there—on the day of the debate, there was not anything in your platform when it came to committing to the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario, but the day after the debate or somewhere around that time, she finally saw the light and decided, "Well, we need to do what we can." And so an unidentified number was attached. I think the language that came from your leader was "Whatever we need; we'll do whatever we need." Clearly, it's something that your party had not thought about. A very clear commitment from our government on the Ring of Fire: \$1 billion—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Last year, the Auditor General said that in six years, the hand-picked Ring of Fire Secretariat spent \$13 million and had nothing to show. Your minister's mandate letter, Premier, says that work on roads and infrastructure in the region to connect with the future Ring of Fire development would start in 2018. So northerners won't even see your Ring of Fire for a decade or more.

When will this government have the once-in-a-lifetime Ring of Fire development shovel-ready?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I know that the member opposite represents a northern community and a northern riding, and I would expect that in his questions and in his knowledge of this particular issue, he would at least attach some importance and make some reference to the significant amount of work that's gone on by the minister and the government in terms of working with our First Nation partners, in terms of the ability to advance this project. But on a number of occasions, as the critic for northern development and mines and on this file, he has stood in this place and asked these questions as if that is not a significant component regarding what has to occur before the project can go forward.

Speaker, we know that that is significant. You know the minister has done a lot of work in that particular regard. I would like to say to the member, once again, it would be nice if your leader would actually stake out a position and make a commitment on this in terms of what dollars she would attach, if she had the opportunity to lead the province, to the Ring of Fire in northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would offer a reminder that you always refer your questions and your answers to the Chair. When you start getting into across, it's more confrontational. I appreciate that.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to recognize the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka on a point of order.

Mr. Norm Miller: I wanted to welcome the mayor of Kenora, Dave Canfield, who is in the east members'

gallery, and Kristen Oliver, the executive director of the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport on a point of order.

Hon. Eleanor McMahon: They've unfortunately left the chamber but I do want to welcome, from my riding of Burlington, teacher Judith Genis, six teachers from Ontario and from my community, along with students from the Netherlands—42 students in all—from Apeldoorn, our twin city in the Netherlands, here visiting the Ontario Legislature as part of a twin-city youth exchange. Welcome to Queen's Park.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for allocation of time on Bill 13. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1139 to 1144.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would all members please take their seats.

On Tuesday, September 27, 2016, Mr. Naqvi moved government notice of motion number 1. All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Anderson, Granville	Fraser, John	Moridi, Reza
Baker, Yvan	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Ballard, Chris	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	Orazietti, David
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Potts, Arthur
Chan, Michael	Kiawala, Sophie	Qaadir, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Lalonde, Marie-France	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sousa, Charles
Crack, Grant	Malhi, Harinder	Takhar, Harinder S.
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Thibeault, Glenn
Delaney, Bob	Martins, Cristina	Vernile, Daiene
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	McGarry, Kathryn	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dong, Han	McMahon, Eleanor	Zimmer, David
Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hillier, Randy	Pettapiece, Randy
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Sattler, Peggy
Barrett, Toby	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Singh, Jagmeet
Coe, Lorne	Mantha, Michael	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	Martow, Gila	Tabuns, Peter
Fife, Catherine	McDonell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
French, Jennifer K.	McNaughton, Monte	Van Hof, John
Gélinas, France	Miller, Norm	Walker, Bill
Gretzky, Lisa	Miller, Paul	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Harris, Michael	Natyshak, Taras	Yurek, Jeff
Hatfield, Percy	Nicholls, Rick	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 50; the nays are 38.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1148 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PROPANE INDUSTRY

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm here to welcome members of the Canadian Propane Association to the Legislature for their propane day at Queen's Park.

Much has been said recently about the efforts of so many to work with the natural gas industry to support its expansion in rural Ontario. We've been supportive of that expansion. But let's talk about propane, another clean-burning gas that is of primary importance, particularly to those in rural Ontario. The propane industry supports, either directly or indirectly, almost 3,000 workers here in Ontario. Many of the over 125 propane businesses are family-owned, with deep ties to their community; that is certainly the case in my neck of the woods. These businesses have made significant investments, building the infrastructure to serve their customers as effectively as possible.

As we all work together to reduce our carbon emissions, the contribution that propane can make should not be overlooked. When looking at alternatives to oil-burning furnaces, the rational alternative in many cases is propane. Areas of my riding with many beautiful lakes surrounded by seasonal homes and cottages, where there is no prospect of natural gas expansion any time in the near future, are obvious candidates for conversion to propane, as many already have.

As we move to make our environment cleaner with less carbon, we shouldn't create an unlevel playing field and limit the choice of consumers. Propane should be counted on as a clean alternative and should not be disadvantaged by any programs that the government would advance.

A cleaner environment, consumer choice—I think we can all support that.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'm proud to rise today as the MPP for Windsor West and as education critic for the New Democratic caucus to talk about education in Ontario.

One of the first steps to quality education is actually getting our children to and from schools safely and on time. Unfortunately, parents in much of Ontario are nearing the fourth week that they've faced uncertainty getting their child to school and have experienced major

delays as a result of a school bus driver shortage. When children can't even get to school, you know that education in this province is reaching a tipping point.

While the Minister of Education seems content to monitor the issue, there is much that she could have done to prevent this issue in the first place. I wrote to the minister about this issue in July and drivers say that there is a shortage almost every year.

Speaker, school bus drivers are the lowest-paid transit workers in the province, especially when you factor in the unpaid work that they are expected to perform. Yet they are charged with perhaps the greatest responsibility: transporting our children to and from school each day.

These drivers have a passion for education and a commitment to student safety. It's time we have a school transportation procurement process that works for our drivers and families in Ontario. It's time we had a process that ensures our students will get to school on time and boards won't be left scrambling in the first weeks of school to fill the gaps. In order to do that, we need this government and the Minister of Education to stop skirting responsibility and act to improve student transportation in Ontario.

TRANSCARE COMMUNITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Ms. Soo Wong: It is an honour for me to rise today to recognize TransCare Community Support Services. TransCare is a charitable and accredited organization located in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt that has been serving Scarborough residents since 1976. They provide home and community support services to seniors and adults with disabilities.

On September 30, TransCare will be celebrating its 40th anniversary. This recognized community-based organization continues to provide quality home care services, home care products, and health and wellness programs to keep seniors healthy, active and safe in their community.

I'd like to recognize and thank Odette Maharaj, the executive director of TransCare; her board of directors; and staff and volunteers for their significant milestone. I look forward to participating in this Friday's anniversary celebration of this wonderful community-based organization.

Scarborough—Agincourt residents are very fortunate to have TransCare as an active, accessible partner in their community.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just came from Freedom Day 2016, which was celebrated at Dundas square with over 3,500 students from around the GTA, hosted by the Canadian Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center. I was there with Police Chief Saunders, Avi Benlolo from the Simon Wiesenthal organization, and a good friend and a big supporter of Simon Wiesenthal, Allen Grinberg, as

well as Councillor James Pasternak. It was very exciting and I'm inviting everybody to join next year.

Tomorrow is Sobeys Kosher Market's ribbon-cutting, because they've newly renovated this real hub of the community in Thornhill. It's the largest kosher market in all of Canada, right in my riding. I welcome everybody to come visit on Clark Avenue. Tomorrow, they are donating \$2,500 of community donations to DANI. It's an organization—Developing and Nurturing Independence. I've spoken about it and given statements here on it as well. It's to help adults in the Jewish community with disabilities. Other communities are involved as well. It's a real hub and a real iconic experience. I invite everybody to come and see.

On Friday morning—more about food—the Consul General of Israel, Galit Baram, and Jay Brodbar of MAZON Canada are donating a lot of food—6,800 breakfasts—to York region students in the spirit of learning. It's part of the Rosh Hashanah experience, which is not just to feed your family but to feed your community and those in need as well.

BEAR CONTROL

Mr. Michael Mantha: This year, constituents across Algoma-Manitoulin have noted a definite increase in the number of human-black bear interactions, and growing. People are fearful of letting their children out to play. Many seniors also fear to venture into their backyards, parks or sidewalks as some feel especially vulnerable given their physical limitations. Frustration mounts at the lack of MNR assistance and the non-existent Bear Wise Program.

Education is just not enough. We have heard time and time again that the bears are eating off people's back doors, all night, all day, tearing down doors and damaging property, and people are even finding bear droppings on the roofs of their homes. Have you ever had a bear on the roof of your home, Mr. Speaker? Have you ever been caught in your driveway between a mother bear and her cub?

Calls to the ministry have proven to be ineffective, with responses such as "Properly store your garbage," "Clean your barbecue," "Call the OPP" or "But wait; don't worry. The bears are more interested in eating the acorns and apples in your backyard than they are in hurting your family."

Have you ever been in a bear's eyesight? Citizens are being forced to take action. They have had no choice but to resort to what I refer to as a three-S rule: shoot, shovel and shut up. And when they do it, the reality of what they have to do to protect their homes, their livestock and their loved ones—they are treated like criminals.

Minister McGarry, welcome to your new role. Listen, learn and take action now.

SHIMON PERES

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise today to pay tribute to one of the founding fathers of the modern state of Israel. I know

Jews all over my riding, all over Canada, Jews in Israel, Christians, Muslims—everyone has lost a true friend of peace. Shimon Peres passed away at 93 years of age. He was an incredible advocate for peace. He was an incredible builder of the state of Israel. He served in the Knesset for 47 years, three times as Prime Minister and President. He was the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1994.

I know the Premier was fortunate to meet with him last May in her visit to Israel. I personally met with this incredible giant of a man in Tel Aviv. I met him here in Toronto. I don't think I've ever met a more impressive man who led the world in the search for peace in the Middle East.

Shimon Peres will never be forgotten. As President Obama said, "A light has gone out, but the hope he gave us will burn forever."

Todah rabah. Rest in peace, Shimon Peres. Shalom, Mr. President.

BLACKBERRY

Mr. Michael Harris: As many have heard, there was some big news coming from the digital technology company in Waterloo that put the "smart" into smart phones. **1510**

While we understand we are seeing the impacts of new economic realities hitting home with the discontinuation of handset hardware development, I'm pleased to report that BlackBerry devices will remain alive, well, and providing the most secure workspace it has built its reputation on for years to come.

While it's true that BlackBerry leadership in secure device software will become the company's main focus, reports of the death of the much loved and utilized BlackBerry handset, to quote Mark Twain, are "greatly exaggerated."

That's right: You'll still be able to browse, text, tweet and talk on your new, latest PRIV, DTEK50 and soon-to-be DTEK60 or Passport, as the technology leader fully leverages third parties to develop hardware and distribute and support the BlackBerry handset brand.

So despite what you may have heard, there will continue to be BlackBerry branded devices, and BlackBerry will continue to design, develop and manage the software running on those devices to ensure that they continue to be the world's most secure Android smartphone. As we know, with more security approvals than any other, the "most secure workspace" has long been provided by BlackBerry. That's why leaders and governments around the world use nothing but their trusted BlackBerry, and that's why they will continue to use it for years to come.

COMMUNITY HEALTH AND WELLBEING WEEK

M^{me} France Gélinas: Did you know that between September 26 and October 1, the 108 members of the Association of Ontario Health Centres are celebrating

Community Health and Wellbeing Week? The theme this year is “Shift the Conversation.” The week is all about starting a new conversation about health and health care in Ontario.

Treating illness is important, but Ontario needs to do a much better job at preventing people from getting sick in the first place. The need is urgent. Diabetes rates are on the rise, the likelihood of depression is growing, and, according to the Canadian Index of Wellbeing, the level at which we rate our health status is falling.

What does that mean for Ontario’s health system? Well, it needs to do a much better job at responding to non-medical factors harming health and well-being. We should prioritize the 5% of people who make up two thirds of health care expenditures. Who are they, Speaker? They are people who live in poverty, are hungry, or who are socially or geographically isolated.

The health system transformation needs to adopt a wider focus. It needs to shift from treatment to disease prevention. That means the Patients First bill needs to achieve a better balance by shifting the focus from treating patients when they are sick to keeping people and communities healthy.

Happy Community Health and Wellbeing Week to everyone. Remember, now is the time to shift the conversations from patients first to people and communities first.

ST. MARY’S GENERAL HOSPITAL

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Speaker, I’d like to share some news with you and members of this House on a local hospital in Kitchener–Waterloo, St. Mary’s hospital, and it’s some good news.

Earlier this year, a group of cardiologists came to visit me at my constituency office, which is just down the street from St. Mary’s. These doctors wanted to talk about improving cardiac care services in our community. They offered details on how the program operates and how they wanted to see wait times improve. Their overall goal is to better serve heart patients in Kitchener–Waterloo and surrounding areas. It is said that St. Mary’s is a medium-sized hospital that punches way above its weight. I also heard from the hospital’s president; his name is Don Shilton. He advocated for an electrophysiology suite that would expand cardiac services.

So I took their concerns to our health minister, Dr. Eric Hoskins, and to senior policy staff within the ministry. After a few conversations, I was delighted when the minister signed off on approving this new catheter lab. In the summer, he came to visit St. Mary’s and made the official announcement to fund this new \$7-million facility. This is going to be a great asset to Kitchener–Waterloo and surrounding areas. As our community grows—and it is growing—and as we’re aging, knowing that we can provide this kind of specialized care means that people in my community don’t have to drive to Toronto or London to get this kind of treatment.

I want to thank the minister for supporting my community, and I commend all the health care workers who

work so hard and who are dedicated in Kitchener–Waterloo.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

A point of order from the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I beg your indulgence because, unfortunately, I was not born with eyes in the back of my head. But if I could introduce two folks that I met with today: Greg McCamus and, from my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Donaven Welk, here today with the Canadian Propane Association. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do have eyes in the back of my head.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

SENIORS

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I rise today to remind my colleagues that October 1, this coming Saturday, is National Seniors Day. It is also the United Nations International Day of Older Persons. We are proud here in Ontario to take part in observing both. We are proud to pay tribute to the women and men who helped build our province and our country, and we are proud of the many valuable contributions that seniors continue to make in our society. They enrich our communities; they enrich our workplaces; they enrich our lives.

Ontario, like other jurisdictions, is dealing with a major demographic shift that has seen the number of seniors in our province increase significantly, and we know that the numbers will continue to grow. This is what I think about every day: There are over two million seniors in Ontario; in 25 years, there will be about four million. For the first time now, there are more Ontarians over the age of 65 than there are children in Ontario under the age of 15—and I’m sure the pages are listening intently to that.

What’s even more striking is the diversity of Ontario’s seniors. Just under half are immigrants, many live in rural and smaller communities, and as many as 7% are not fluent in either English or French. This is a change that is unprecedented in modern times for Canada, and the Ontario government, like governments in Canada and around the world, recognizes this reality.

Today, people are living longer, active, productive, healthier lives, and that has a host of implications for policy-makers in all fields. I think it is my job—in fact, I think it is our job, here in this chamber—to ensure that Ontario seniors are able to live those extra years with purpose and dignity.

Ontario has long recognized the importance of supporting and honouring seniors. Through the work of our Ontario Seniors' Secretariat, we have supported policy and program initiatives that help improve the quality of life of seniors. I'd like to take a few moments now to tell my colleagues about some of the many ways we are working to keep Ontario seniors healthy, happy and independent, because they deserve nothing less.

It starts with Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors—

Interjection.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: You're already there; I'm getting there—a plan we launched in 2013 to help us meet the challenges posed by an aging population. The action plan is a ground-breaking strategy that stresses, first and foremost, the importance of creating age-friendly communities.

What do we mean by “age-friendly communities”? We mean inclusive, accessible environments with programs and services that make a difference in the lives of older adults. We mean communities where seniors are supported and empowered to stay healthy, active and engaged with the people and organizations around them for as long as possible.

Supporting age-friendly communities is a key component of Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors. Since the release of that plan, we have launched a number of initiatives intended to do just that.

In 2013, we released the Age-Friendly Community Planning guide, which explains the characteristics of an age-friendly community and how it can respond to the opportunities and challenges of an aging population. The guide outlines step-by-step processes and tools to help municipalities and communities develop and implement action plans that will lead to senior-friendly communities which are socially and physically accessible and inclusive.

1520

We're also supporting municipalities and communities in their efforts by investing \$200,000 in the Age-Friendly Communities Outreach Initiative, which provides education and assistance to communities interested in adopting age-friendly planning principles. If there are MPPs here who'd like to see their communities involved with this, please let me know.

Beyond education, however, we are also investing in specific projects. The Age-Friendly Community Planning Grant Program, which we launched in 2014, is already providing funding for 56 projects across Ontario. This funding is supporting communities in the development or improvement of age-friendly planning. The program is encouraging municipalities to apply an age-friendly lens to all areas of local planning, and it is also building awareness and momentum across the province, so that all communities are encouraged to embrace age-friendly planning and raise the standards they have in place.

Another program we launched in 2014 was the Seniors Community Grant Program to support small community projects that help keep seniors connected, active and engaged. Grants under this program range from \$500 to

\$8,000. I'm talking about things like dance classes, day trips and reading clubs, as well as information campaigns or speaker series on topics such as financial literacy, hands-on computer workshops and many intergenerational projects. These projects help seniors stay engaged, contribute to their local communities and avoid the harm of social isolation.

Speaker, since its launch in 2014, the program has given more than 256,000 seniors the opportunity to enjoy activities in their communities and beyond so that the richness of their experiences and learning continues to flourish. To date, we have invested approximately \$5 million in this program.

Another important community resource for seniors are elderly persons centres, or EPCs. There are 263 of them across the province, and more than 100,000 seniors benefit from the services they offer every year. Seniors are offered access to social and recreational programs, such as fitness and cooking classes, Meals on Wheels, various transportation services and falls prevention classes. They also receive health, education and support services. Clearly, the EPC program is one we value, and it is key to keeping seniors active and engaged in their communities.

Speaker, I have been speaking until now about the various ways we have been attempting to improve the lives of seniors within their communities. But as my colleagues are well aware, sometimes you have to do more than encourage a happy life; you also have to ensure a safe one. We never lose sight of our obligation to protect Ontario seniors. Sadly, one of the things we have to protect them against is elder abuse. This isn't something anyone wants as an issue, but it is. It can be emotional, it can be physical, it can be financial or it can be just plain neglect. It is abuse, and our government is determined to address it.

Ontario was the first province in Canada to introduce a strategy to combat elder abuse. This strategy focuses on raising awareness, coordinating community services and training front-line staff.

Over the past five years, through our strategic partnerships, we have trained more than 29,000 front-line workers in a variety of sectors, from health to justice to the social services, education and volunteer sectors, to recognize and respond to elder abuse. We have also reached more than 46,000 individuals through public education sessions delivered across the province.

We are in the process of reviewing our current strategy in order to ensure we are providing the very best services and protection for today's seniors. I should note that we have also created mandatory annual training on elder abuse for the Ontario Provincial Police, and we have shared this training with other police services and community agencies.

Elder abuse is a very serious issue, and I can assure my colleagues that this government is determined to do the utmost to protect our seniors.

Another issue of great concern is related to the safety problems caused by dementia. Nearly 221,000 Ontarians

have dementia, and many of them at one time or another have wandered away from their families, homes or caregivers. This is a grave concern. In 2013, in partnership with the Alzheimer Society of Ontario and law enforcement groups, we launched the Finding Your Way wandering prevention program. We're investing over \$750,000 in this program every year.

This multicultural program is intended to help people with dementia, their families and communities to recognize and reduce the risk of going missing, and provides practical advice and tools for handling situations should a wandering incident occur. Program resources are available in 12 languages and include public awareness materials and a safety kit. Last year, we began to expand the focus of the program to help those with dementia live safely in their communities through such efforts as educating service providers—for example, emergency medical services—about dementia and wandering prevention activities.

This year, we are rolling out newly developed training resources and recruiting more volunteers to improve community preparedness and response to wandering incidents. As you may know, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has been leading work on the development of an Ontario dementia strategy and last week launched consultations to help develop the strategy. I encourage all members to review the paper and participate in the consultation process, whether online or in the forthcoming town halls that the Ministry of Health will be leading. We know that dementia care and the availability of supports are important issues for seniors, their families and caregivers, and we wish to ensure that our partners and stakeholders are aware of this important consultation.

We've also taken action to protect seniors from fire by requiring facilities housing vulnerable Ontarians, including retirement homes, to be equipped with automatic sprinkler systems by January 1, 2019. Ours is the first province to make sprinklers mandatory in existing licensed retirement homes and in facilities housing seniors and other vulnerable citizens. To help with this transition, I will be working with my cabinet colleagues in the coming months to develop a funding model to help small or rural retirement homes that would not otherwise be able to afford to install automated sprinkler systems in their homes.

In January 2014, a number of fire safety measures came into force, including changes to the fire and building codes. In addition to requiring automatic sprinklers for all existing licensed retirement homes and care homes, other changes included requiring fire safety measures such as self-closing doors, enhanced fire inspections and staff training, and annual validation of fire safety plans by local fire services. These measures will increase safety and provide peace of mind to seniors living in retirement homes as well as to their families.

Retirement homes, I should note, are also now required to implement a number of protection measures in the Retirement Homes Act that enhance the safety and

care of residents and also give seniors and their families clear information to help them make informed choices about their accommodation and enforceable rights while living in retirement homes. That legislation was a historic step. For the first time in Ontario's history, government established legislative protections for seniors living in retirement homes.

The final thing I want to touch on today is the health of our seniors. I say with real pride that our government is in the process of transforming health care under the leadership of Minister Hoskins in order to make Ontario the healthiest place in North America to grow up and grow old. Our goal is to deliver health care that puts patients at the centre of the system, responds to their needs and makes it easier for providers to deliver care to those who need it, when they need it. This includes making investments across the health care system to better support seniors so they can lead a healthy, engaged and active lifestyle for as long as possible. We know that better community care is critical to support seniors who want to remain independent for as long as possible.

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As announced in the 2016 budget, our government is continuing to fund growth in home and community care at about 5% per year to 2017-18. We're also investing an additional \$75 million over the next three years in community-based residential hospice and palliative and end-of-life care.

We are investing an additional \$10 million annually in Behavioural Supports Ontario for initiatives to help residents with dementia and other complex behaviours and neurological conditions. We are increasing the income threshold for low-income seniors under the Ontario drug plan in order to make access to drugs more affordable for an additional 170,000 lower-income seniors.

Just two weeks ago, I was able to announce that we are providing the shingles vaccine free of charge for Ontario seniors aged 65 to 70. Shingles is a painful and potentially life-altering disease.

These are the kinds of support measures that will help more seniors live healthier, happier lives.

I've not been in this position very long, but the months I've been here have convinced me that there are few responsibilities we have as a government more important than securing the safety, dignity and comfort of our seniors.

I want to end by sharing a small story. This weekend I had the pleasure and the honour of attending the 100th birthday of a constituent of mine. It was such a wonderful experience because I went into this restaurant in the riding, and this lady, 100 years old but cognitively all there—she knew everybody. When I was introduced by her son, she knew exactly who he was referring to. She was thrilled I was there.

To me, the best part of it all was that she was surrounded by 90 people, friends and family. Not only did she have all her children, not only all her grandchildren, not only all her great-grandchildren, but also her great-great-grandchildren. She was born in China, raised in India, lived in Aden and then finally moved to Canada.

As I stepped out of there, I couldn't help but think: If I was to live to be 100, how many people would show up at my 100th birthday party? That's a question.

Interjections.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: There you go: I've got five people coming.

It raised the question about what it means to lead a well-lived life. Seeing it in that lady reminded me of what it means to lead a well-lived life. As the minister responsible for seniors, I think it is one of my primary responsibilities to work on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's time for responses.

Mr. Bill Walker: Today I rise proudly as the critic for long-term care, seniors and accessibility on behalf of our Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus and our leader, Patrick Brown, to recognize National Seniors Day, to be celebrated on October 1.

On this occasion, I would like to take a moment to share with the House Ontario's progress report on seniors' issues. This is an important and revealing overview, weaved together by multiple senior citizens' organizations across our province, and includes concerns echoed by the good people at United Senior Citizens of Ontario—USCO—and the Canadian Association for Retired Persons, CARP.

Aging Ontarians, like other age groups, are feeling the effects of soaring housing, food and energy prices, resulting in rising seniors' poverty rates. It's estimated that one in eight seniors live in poverty today, especially across rural communities. If you ask a senior what they need, you will hear at the extreme end of the needs spectrum that they need access to a nursing home bed and care. Of course, this need arises when the person can no longer live safely at home alone. Yet this government has been slow to act on this need. Even though it talks a great deal about improvements to seniors' care, evidence shows that the opposite is true.

The reality that almost 25,000 seniors today are waiting for a nursing bed, a list expected to double to 50,000 seniors in six years, means that many of our frail and sick seniors are being forced to occupy a hospital bed or, worse, to stay in their homes without proper support, resulting in unnecessary suffering and hardship.

Furthermore, Ontario has aging, crumbling long-term-care homes and 30,000 outdated nursing beds that need to be rebuilt to safe, modern standards. Also, let's not forget that this government continues to fail to protect those inside long-term-care homes by not providing safer staffing levels of nurses and personal support workers to ensure that seniors are receiving high-quality and consistent care—an intolerable situation which I have addressed in estimates committee and directly with the minister.

Three other main issues that arise for seniors are access to affordable prescription drugs, access to affordable and supportive housing and assisted living services, and access to transportation.

For Ontario seniors, life is simply harder under the Wynne Liberals. Ontario seniors rely on their medica-

tions to keep them healthy and out of hospital. Unfortunately, just earlier this year, Ontario seniors had to fight this government over its proposal to hike their drug costs. It's ludicrous to think this government was toying with a plan that would lead some elderly and vulnerable seniors to stop taking their prescription medications over concerns about costs and ultimately put them at risk of being hospitalized and requiring emergency care.

This government has made some strides. We do commend them on agreeing to cover the shingles vaccine for eligible seniors in Ontario, which started this month.

Yet what this government giveth with one hand it taketh away with the other. This brings me to a very contentious topic: age discrimination and stroke recovery. Instead of empowering stroke victims and helping them recover through rehabilitation services, this government is cutting them off. Approximately 5,000 post-stroke patients in Ontario are being denied public treatment services because of age.

I share that this Thursday, the members opposite will have a chance to reverse their course in this blatant case of age discrimination by supporting my colleague Lorne Coe, the Whitby MPP, in his private member's bill to remove the age limit in stroke recovery so that all seniors, regardless of age, can have access to the rehabilitation program they need. Ontario senior stroke victims are counting on your support this Thursday to help reduce their out-of-pocket costs and improve their health.

When it comes to providing our seniors with security and peace of mind, access to safe and affordable housing is top of mind. Imagine my disappointment when I reached out recently to the seniors minister's office about grants to assist senior citizens with housing repairs and accessibility and energy costs. Sadly, the response was zero support.

With that, I'd like to touch on another critical plan that's missing from this government's agenda: the importance of maintaining a good quality life for seniors, which is to help them stay active and connected to friends, family and community through reliable transportation infrastructure. Across rural communities where there is almost no public transportation, seniors are being pushed into further isolation. The minister responsible was quick to use talking points about providing grants for seniors, but the truth is, her government's policies are unresponsive to seniors' transportation needs. I think this is a shame.

In my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, seniors are some of the most dedicated and hardest-working community volunteers. Implementing a reliable and effective transportation system would strengthen and, in the long term, increase their quality of life so they could travel to their medical appointments, to work, to shop, to volunteer or just to be able to visit family and friends.

I fully expect this government to support our seniors' engagement and community service by putting their money where their mouth is, providing money that they promised for community transportation programs. I'll be watching this program closely.

After 13 long years in power, this government remains unprepared to meet the health care needs of our growing and aging population. Seniors have seen their physiotherapy services cut, stroke recovery cut and wait-lists for nursing beds grow while hydro rates are making them choose between turning on the heat and eating. Our seniors deserve better. We want and expect this government to start standing up for them.

As such, our expectations are that the minister responsible will take some time today to reflect on those major and ongoing shortfalls and take action to address them.

I'd like to close by thanking all of our seniors and showing them the respect for leading the way for the great quality of life that we enjoy here in the great province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further responses.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, as the NDP critic for seniors affairs and on behalf of my leader and my party, I am proud to rise and join our voices to the celebration of the International Day of Older Persons on October 1 each year.

I am proud to pay tribute to all the seniors who have helped build our country, our province and our communities. Seniors' contributions are invaluable and are felt across our homes, workplaces and society.

The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the resolution December 16, 1991, which laid out the UN principles for older persons. That resolution included 18 principles which promote independence, participation, care, self-fulfillment and dignity. In Canada, the resolution was adopted into National Seniors Day.

For many, it is an occasion to appreciate and celebrate seniors in our families and our communities. It is a much-needed day for celebration and gratitude, but it is also a day for reflection. It is a time to think about our responsibilities that we have to ensure every senior in our province lives with dignity and respect.

Ontario seniors are waiting for real commitments from all levels of government to address their concerns.

Many believe we have a responsibility or a duty to care for seniors in our communities, but I believe our role as caretakers for Ontario seniors is an honour.

Retirement should be a time to enjoy the fruits of a lifetime of labour, but the reality is that it isn't always like that. The numbers don't paint a very pretty picture, and I want to share some of those so we can reflect on the seriousness of the challenges facing seniors today.

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Currently, there are 600,000 seniors in Canada who live at or below the poverty line, and 12 million working Canadians do not have a workplace pension. Over eight million Canadians provide unpaid care to family members and friends with chronic conditions and disabilities. Caring for a loved one can be a rewarding experience, but it can also be personally challenging and overwhelming.

One in five Canadians believe they know of a senior who might be experiencing some form of abuse. Seniors

from all walks of life are vulnerable to elder abuse, and it is happening in communities across Canada.

For many older Canadians, the traditional rules of retirement are no longer relevant. Many seniors today don't have any choice but to continue to work to afford their daily lives. Skyrocketing hydro bills, the cost of prescription medication and a lack of affordable housing all add up to seniors being forced to make decisions they shouldn't have to. For far too many, their daily lives are rooted in worry and concern, meaning the supports offered by all levels of government are not sufficient to ensure a comfortable, dignified lifestyle in retirement today.

For those of us here today, we should understand those challenges as a call to action. We must do more to take immediate action to care for those seniors who have cared for us all our lives. We have the resources and the tools, but we must be passionate enough to use them. We can take steps that show seniors the respect and reverence we have for their lifetime of working and contributions.

The Wynne government has the ability to make hydro bills and prescription drugs affordable but has allowed too many seniors to fall through the cracks. This October 1, I will be celebrating National Seniors Day and the International Day of Older Persons by being compassionate and hopeful that seniors in Ontario will finally be given the respect and dignity they deserve.

I leave you with this thought from Dr. Robert Goddard: "Resolve to be tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the wrong. Sometime in life you will have been all of these."

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government's mismanagement of the energy sector;

"Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

"Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

"Whereas the recent implementation of the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers

and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

“Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government’s mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario’s power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity.”

I support this petition. I will sign my name and send it with page Cameron.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Michael Mantha: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Privatizing Hydro One: Another Wrong Choice.

“Whereas once you privatize hydro, there’s no return; and

“We’ll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“We’ll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“We’ll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what’s happened elsewhere;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come.”

I wholeheartedly agree with this petition. I present it to page Sophia to bring it down to the Clerks’ table.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly that has been signed by a great many people in the Windsor-Tecumseh area. It’s entitled “Update Ontario Fluoridation Legislation.” It reads as follows:

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that community water fluoridation is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations, including the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ontario Dental Association; and

“Whereas recent experience in Canadian cities that have removed fluoride from drinking water has led directly to a dramatic increase in tooth decay; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care urges support for amending the Fluoridation Act to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing urges support for the removal of provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water

fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario before the end of the” current session of the Ontario Parliament.

I’m pleased to sign and to support this petition and to send it down with my page from Mississauga–Streetsville, Adam.

HYDRO RATES

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the price of electricity has skyrocketed under the Ontario Liberal government;

“Whereas ever-higher hydro bills are a huge concern for everyone in the province, especially seniors and others on fixed incomes, who can’t afford to pay more;

“Whereas Ontario’s businesses say high electricity costs are making them uncompetitive, and have contributed to the loss of hundreds of thousands of manufacturing jobs;

“Whereas the recent Auditor General’s report”—I guess not so recent, now—“found Ontarians overpaid for electricity by \$37 billion over the past eight years and estimates that we will overpay by an additional \$133 billion over the next 18 years if nothing changes;

“Whereas the cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants costing \$1.1 billion, feed-in tariff (FIT) contracts with wind and solar companies, the sale of surplus energy to neighbouring jurisdictions at a loss, the debt retirement charge, the global adjustment and smart meters that haven’t met their conservation targets have all put upward pressure on hydro bills;

“Whereas the sale of 60% of Hydro One is opposed by a majority of Ontarians and will likely only lead to even higher hydro bills;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To listen to Ontarians, reverse course on the Liberal government’s current hydro policies and take immediate steps to stabilize hydro bills.”

I’m happy to affix my name and send it down to the Clerk with page Tegan.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Percy Hatfield: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a growing number of Ontarians are affected by the growth in low-wage, part-time, casual, temporary and insecure employment; and

“Whereas too many workers are unprotected by current minimum standards outlined in employment and labour laws; and

“Whereas the Ontario government is currently engaging in a public consultation to review and improve employment and labour laws in the province;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Implement a minimum wage of \$15 an hour” and do it now.

I agree. I’ll give this to Cameron to bring down to the Clerk.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Grant Crack: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there are critical transportation infrastructure needs for the province;

“Whereas giving people multiple avenues for their transportation needs takes cars off the road;

“Whereas public transit increases the quality of life for Ontarians and helps the environment;

“Whereas the constituents of Orléans and east Ottawa are in need of greater transportation infrastructure;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Support the Moving Ontario Forward plan and the Ottawa LRT phase II construction, which will help address the critical transportation infrastructure needs of Orléans, east Ottawa and the province of Ontario.”

I agree with this, and I’m going to affix my signature and give it to page Declan.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Not surprisingly, this petition is to the Legislative Assembly to lower hydro rates.

“Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government’s mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

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“Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

“Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

“Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

“Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government’s mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario’s power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity.”

I support this petition and give it to page Sarah to take to the table.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to thank Madame Ella Young from Garson in my riding for this petition. It reads as follows:

“Whereas for all Ontarians—no matter who they are, or where they live—the health of their family comes first, and it should come first for the government of Ontario;

“Whereas 1,200 nurses have been laid off since January 2015;

“Whereas hospital beds are being closed across Ontario; and

“Whereas hospital budgets have been frozen for four years, and increases this year will not keep up with inflation or a growing population”;

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the cuts to our hospitals, “and ensure that, at a minimum, hospital funding keeps up with the growing costs of inflation and population growth”—and the special needs of northern Ontario—“each and every year.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Jesse to bring it to the Clerk.

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that is addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that community water fluoridation is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations, including the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Ontario Dental Association; and

“Whereas recent experience in Canadian cities that have removed fluoride from drinking water has led directly to a dramatic increase in tooth decay; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care urges support for amending the Fluoridation Act to ensure community water fluoridation is mandatory; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing urges support for the removal of provisions allowing Ontario municipalities to cease drinking water fluoridation, or fail to start drinking water fluoridation, from the Ontario Municipal Act;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Premier of Ontario direct the Ministries of Municipal Affairs and Housing and Health and Long-Term Care to amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario before the end of the first session of the current Ontario Parliament.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition, will affix my name and send it to the table with page Tori.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition with regard to electricity prices. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current ... government took office;

“Whereas over half of Ontarians’ power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment;

“Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss;

“Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the ... government’s lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount;

“Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating;

“Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills;

“Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this ... government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians’ electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians’ energy bills.”

I support this petition and give it to Matthew.

MIDWIFERY

Ms. Catherine Fife: I’d like to read this petition to the House for the first time.

“Ontario Needs Pay Equity for Midwives

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas midwives provide expert, women-centred care before, during and six weeks following birth; and

“Whereas midwifery is a female-dominated profession, with women comprising over 99% of the field; and

“Whereas midwives have been providing cost-effective care since 1994, despite not receiving a pay increase until 2005; and

“Whereas a 2016 report found that the health care industry in Ontario has a 37% gender wage gap, contributing to this provincially systemic issue; and

“Whereas in September 2014, Premier Wynne directed the Minister of Labour and the minister responsible for women’s issues to collectively develop a wage gap strategy for the province of Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to work with the Association of Ontario Midwives to reinstate a pay equity lens for the profession of midwifery, and compensate midwives appropriately for the expert, women-centred, continuum of care that they provide to pre- and post-natal mothers and infants.”

I fully support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Brendan.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas household electricity bills have skyrocketed by 56% and electricity rates have tripled as a result of the Liberal government’s mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Whereas the billion-dollar gas plants cancellation, wasteful and unaccountable spending at Ontario Power Generation and the unaffordable subsidies in the Green Energy Act will result in electricity bills climbing by another 35% by 2017 and 45% by 2020; and

“Whereas the Liberal government wasted \$2 billion on the flawed smart meter program; and

“Whereas the recent announcement to implement the Ontario Electricity Support Program will see average household hydro bills increase an additional \$137 per year starting in 2016; and

“Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and small businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

“Whereas home heating and electricity are a necessity for families in Ontario who cannot afford to continue footing the bill for the government’s mismanagement of the energy sector;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately implement policies ensuring Ontario’s power consumers, including families, farmers and employers, have affordable and reliable electricity.”

I fully support it, will affix my name and send it with page Ryan.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTION FINANCES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE FINANCEMENT ÉLECTORAL

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 26, 2016, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to election matters / Projet de loi 2, Loi visant à modifier diverses lois en ce qui a trait à des questions concernant les élections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe we ended with the third party. We now start with the government and the Minister for Government and Consumer Services.

L'hon. Marie-France Lalonde: Merci, monsieur le Président. I would just like to let you know that I will be sharing my time with the member for Barrie and the member for Kitchener Centre.

Il me fait grand plaisir aujourd’hui de vous parler du nouveau projet de loi modifiant les lois en ce qui concerne le financement électoral. Je regardais un petit peu ce que ce document était. On en a entendu parler durant l’été. Il y a eu un comité qui s'est promené. C'était une chose unique qui est arrivée : on a envoyé, après la première lecture, le comité pour regarder ce que les gens nous disaient dans chacune des communautés de l'Ontario.

J'aimerais peut-être joindre ma voix un petit peu à ce que dit notre projet de loi. C'est quand même un projet de loi où on avait consulté le parti de l'opposition et le troisième parti. Pour en revenir à ce projet de nouveau financement électoral, la loi apportera des réformes dans plusieurs domaines clés.

Les contributions faites à des partis politiques et à d'autres acteurs de la scène politique—à savoir, candidats, associations, circonscriptions, candidats à l'investiture et candidats à la direction d'un parti—est un des changements.

Un autre changement serait les dépenses de publicité par des tiers pendant une période électorale et par des partis politiques et des tiers dans la période de six mois qui précède les élections générales prévues.

On parle aussi d'une autre réforme au niveau de la réglementation des candidats à l'investiture, à savoir, les personnes qui cherchent à se faire parrainer en tant que candidats officiels d'un parti dans une circonscription électorale.

Le projet de loi introduit également quelques autres changements, et je vais vous en parler un petit peu plus—

je vais prendre environ cinq minutes avec vous aujourd’hui—dont les règles relatives aux prêts et cautionnements de prêt, une allocation par vote et des seuils de remboursement des dépenses électorales.

Ce qu'on propose est vraiment une nouvelle approche du financement des partis, des candidats et de l'association de circonscription, mais aussi un durcissement des règles relatives aux activités de financement.

Donc, selon le système proposé, il serait interdit à des personnes morales et des syndicats de faire des contributions ou de cautionner des prêts à des partis, des candidats, des associations de circonscription, des candidats à l'investiture et des candidats à la direction d'un parti.

On regarde aussi un changement au niveau des contributions des particuliers. On ne pourrait pas dépasser 3 600 \$. On parle de 1 200 \$ à un parti au cours d'une année, 1 200 \$ à un candidat d'un parti dans une période électorale et aussi 1 200 \$ à une association de circonscription et à un candidat à l'investiture pour l'année civile.

Un autre aspect que l'on propose à ce projet de loi, c'est que les partis devront afficher publiquement des renseignements sur les activités de financement sur leur site Web avant la date de l'activité de financement, y compris le montant des frais exigés et les bénéficiaires des fonds recueillis.

On parle aussi des contributions de particuliers, comme je mentionnais, qui ne peuvent pas dépasser 1 200 \$ pour tous les bénéficiaires à une activité de financement. Cette réforme, qui je crois soulève plusieurs questions, plusieurs beaux débats ici en Chambre et à travers la province, est quand même une réflexion du programme de financement au niveau fédéral qui avait été amené il y a plusieurs années. Il y a une certaine uniformité pour nous, parlementaires, pour nous aider dans ce processus, mais aussi pour nos associations.

Un autre projet au niveau des publicités politiques que j'aimerais soulever : les partis ne pourront pas dépenser plus de un million de dollars pour de la publicité politique au cours de la période de six mois qui précède la convocation des électeurs en vue d'une élection générale.

Je vais juste terminer en vous disant un aspect vraiment que je crois qu'on n'a pas peut-être beaucoup soulevé. C'est les candidats à l'investiture. Selon le projet de loi proposé, les candidats à l'investiture devront s'inscrire afin de recevoir des contributions ou des dépôts et d'engager des dépenses, et devront faire rapport sur ces activités, ce qui est vraiment quelque chose de nouveau pour nous au niveau d'un système à l'investiture que j'ai même moi eu la chance de faire avec d'autres candidats.

Donc, ça c'est vraiment quelque chose que je voulais soulever aujourd’hui avec vous. Je vais laisser le temps à mes collègues de continuer ce beau débat.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Merci. The member from Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I was fortunate to be part of the general government committee who took this bill on the

road. We had many places that we wanted to go; unfortunately, not all of them had the two hours of people sign up to debate. However, the places that we did go, they were very welcoming. We listened to all of the participants. We had teleconferences. We were able to hear from people from many different organizations and walks of life.

At this time, I'd like to thank all of the members of the committee because it did take a fair amount of time away from our constituency offices, and although it's very important that we do this, it was a sacrifice that a lot of the MPPs had to make to do this during the summer months when it's very important that we're in our constituency offices.

Throughout this process, our goal has been to change the way that politics are done in Ontario. We heard from many of the contributors that one of the most important things that we need to do is take the importance of money out of campaigns, and we hope to do that. As my colleague the MPP from Orléans said, we want to make sure that the democratic process is as equal as possible for all voters and for all of our constituents. That meant lowering some limits and doing some things that may not necessarily be that favourable with all politicians. However, our Premier has directed our caucus to stop hosting large-scale fundraisers where ministers interacted solely with stakeholders of their portfolios. We believe that's right, and that has happened. That's why we brought forward a bill that banned corporate and union donations entirely. This is so that, again, it will be an equal playing field for all people who are seeking election.

Over the summer months, we heard from the opposition parties, experts and the general public on how we could improve this bill. As a result, we brought forth comprehensive amendments that included lowering the contribution limits even further than, I believe, the federal rules suggest at this point. We also want to create a clear definition of third-party advertising. There was much debate about this. It is important that we get this right. We hope to do that through this bill. We also want to strengthen the limits for government advertising before the election. Again, this has been discussed, and we want to continue to discuss this and get it correct.

To address the issue of fundraising events, we proposed working with all political parties to develop a code of conduct. We believe this is very important. That's one of the issues that we will continue to work on as this bill proceeds.

In order to strengthen democracy and its institutions, we want to continue to show leadership by going another step further. That's why we're bringing forth an amendment to ban fundraising events for all MPPs, candidates, party leaders, nomination contestants and leadership contestants. Quite frankly, there were a lot of people who were surprised about this and may have thought, at first, that this would be very difficult. I believe there are ways to do this and that it is in the best interests of democracy that we do so.

There were no amendments before the committee that went as far as we need to go on this issue. Rules on

fundraising should apply equally to all political parties. Banning fundraising events is a significant change that will affect both the parties and the riding associations. That's why our amendment will also increase the per-vote allowance for us to get through this time when the rules are changing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener Centre.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to join the debate this afternoon, along with my colleague from Barrie and the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. We're here talking about the elections financing act, and what I'd like to talk to you about today—I don't think we've touched on this yet, and that is the reason why we even fundraise in the first place. Why is it that we go to constituents and stakeholders and we ask for contributions?

Everyone in this room, when you have the desire to serve your community, whether it's at the federal, provincial or local level, the reality is that you need money to run a campaign, right? That is probably the top reason preventing many people from stepping forward. They know that when they are going to get involved in an election campaign, it's going to cost thousands and thousands of dollars. I will say to you that if it's a barrier for everyone, imagine especially for women, who traditionally have difficulty having access to capital.

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So you decide to run, and what are you looking at? You've got to rent campaign headquarters. Then you have to get Internet and cable for your campaign headquarters. Maybe you're going to get a photocopy machine, paper. Perhaps you have to get appliances if the place doesn't come with appliances. Then comes—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Beer.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Beer. Okay, maybe you're paying for beer. I didn't; people just volunteered. But maybe you were buying beer.

What you spend the big money on is signs. We all have to buy signs. We bought signs. I ordered the same number that my predecessor John Milloy had ordered, and within two weeks we ran out, and I had to order more signs. Within a week we ran out of those. He campaigned with me quite a great deal—he's a very generous person—and he was teasing me that he was angry that I had more signs than he had.

After that, you're getting those brochures that you put in people's mailboxes. If you have the wherewithal, maybe you're buying advertising—and that can be very expensive—in newspapers, radio and TV.

So what are we looking at? Maybe you can stage your campaign for as little as \$20,000? No. I think people are spending more—\$50,000, \$60,000. The average I hear is about \$100,000. That's what a provincial candidate needs when they're launching a campaign. They need \$100,000 in order to try to win their seat.

Now, unless you're independently wealthy, like Donald Trump, who says he's financing his campaign on his own, the rest of us have to find ways to fundraise. We heard that there is a public desire, though, to change the

guidelines. We were all following the same rules. Earlier today, our energy minister spoke and mentioned a long list of events that the Leader of the Opposition was or is going to stage—\$500, \$1,000, \$2,000 to have access to Patrick Brown. We were all following the same rules.

But now there is public desire to see those guidelines change, and our Premier was listening. This is why she announced that we are stopping hosting large-scale fundraisers where ministers are interacting with stakeholders tied to their portfolios.

We also have within this bill that we are proposing banning corporate and union donations. This is stopping. There was the perception that perhaps these businesses or unions had a vested interest in trying to influence politicians by making donations. That has stopped. Corporations and unions will no longer have access to this. They're not making donations.

We had, as you've heard, a government committee that toured this summer across Ontario getting input from the public, hearing their really great suggestions. Here they are:

We are lowering contribution limits even further. The maximum is \$1,200. That's less than what they are earning federally.

We're creating a very clear definition on third-party advertising. Whether it's a lobby group or a union, those groups now are going to have very clear definitions on what they can and can't do.

We're strengthening limits for government advertising before an election.

I think a lot of people find it very annoying when it's a year before an election, two years before an election, and you start to see these ads on TV—some of them are quite vicious—where they try to characterize a candidate in a certain way. There will be limitations to that. We are strengthening that particular rule.

We proposed working with all political parties. We did this on this code of conduct. We welcome everyone's feedback and appreciate it.

We are continuing to show leadership by going even further, Mr. Speaker. This is why we brought forward an amendment to ban fundraising events for all MPPs, candidates, party leaders, nomination contestants and leadership contestants.

I know that the opposition—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Point of order, the member from Frontenac-Lanark.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The member from Kitchener just mentioned that the government has brought forward an amendment. I haven't seen any amendment filed or tabled. So if the member from Kitchener could provide the table with that amendment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Thank you. It's not a point of order but I would ask the member if there's any clarification for her remarks to please do so. If not, continue.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Yes. Just to clarify, Mr. Speaker, this is part of the bill that we are bringing forward. That

information is now in the bill. It is a sweeping assurance to the people of Ontario that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Point of order, the member from Renfrew.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The member has just said it's in the bill. If I'm incorrect, I'd ask the member to read or tell us which clause of the bill she's referring to, because I cannot see that in the bill whatsoever.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): To the member from Kitchener Centre: If you could clarify your remarks, that would be greatly appreciated.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While we have people who are looking for that, let me continue the discussion and to please the member by saying that it is our suggestion at this point that we move forward with sweeping changes to prevent MPPs, candidates, party leaders, nomination contestants and leadership contestants—that they no longer be able to attend fundraising events. We're making it as strict as possible. This is going to be the strictest, most transparent rule of any province in Canada. We want to have equality for all parties. Banning fundraising events is a very significant change that's going to affect all parties and riding associations.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment is also going to increase the per-vote allowance, and that is going to be a way to help candidates bridge, as they're no longer going to be fundraising the way we did in the traditional way. They will have this money now in order to run their campaigns. You heard me, earlier on, talking about what it costs to run a campaign.

We're changing the way politics is done in Ontario. It's going to make our province's electoral financing system among the strongest and the most transparent in Canada, and I appreciate this opportunity to share this with you. I hope the people at home appreciate why it is that we fundraise the way we do: because it's important for us to pay for our campaigns.

I've just had a note handed to me—a little more clarification. It's an amendment that is coming in committee. But we have announced our intentions. This was made reference to during his debate as well. I thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jim McDonell: We're glad to hear a leak from the back row that there's an amendment coming. I guess we weren't supposed to know about that. They had the opportunity, when they reissued the bill, to put that amendment in, but they chose not to, even though they had identified that they were interested in it during the summertime. So it's interesting.

We talk about cash-for-access. This government has brought it to a new level. We've got corporations telling how they've been denied access to a cabinet minister, but, "If you were to come to this \$15,000 dinner tonight, we could have you sit with him." They've taken this to a higher level. They talk about not having members attend fundraisers, but we know that that's still going on, even

though there was a commitment from the Premier that that had stopped. We find—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Grant Crack): I'd ask members on the government side to please tone it down just a little bit. I'm having difficulty hearing the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry.

Continue.

Mr. Jim McDonell: We find that these fundraisers are still going on, but the Premier's chief of staff is the guest person there, plus other senior officials. These guys just take it to a higher level. It's hard to keep up with them. Now we have the new leak of this amendment coming out where they're going to ban it.

There's a reason why people are upset. They'd like to see an election tomorrow because they're fed up with the shenanigans of this government.

They filled their coffers. Now they want to make sure that the opposition does not have a chance for fundraisers over the next year and a half. These guys are rich. We've seen millions of dollars—about \$1.3 million in political donations from solar and wind companies alone. That's just one group.

I know I should have had more time, but the heckling—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

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Ms. Catherine Fife: What you have here in this House today is a competitive spirit around spinning from the Liberal government on Bill 2. What we heard from the people of this province is that they genuinely believe that policy and programs and legislation were being bought. That is why this government was forced to address it in Bill 2. But they still failed to even address in Bill 2 the key issues, which are the conflict of interests. If you have a Minister of Energy and he is sitting in a boardroom with six financial companies who will benefit from the sell-off of Hydro One—who, actually, we found did benefit from the sell-off of Hydro One to the tune of \$56 million—then that is a conflict of interest. The Integrity Commissioner said to us in committee, "I don't have the power to hold this government to account because the legislation is so weak." This government refused. We brought forward amendments. The government refused. We brought forward amendments to make sure that this government is not abusive of the government advertising and putting a Liberal spin—so the taxpayers of this province have to pay for, to add insult to injury.

Of course, the issue in play right now is that this government has introduced Bill 2 with the shadow of further changes, transformative changes. Please, the promise of integrity coming to this process is late. And what's most unfortunate is that it has compromised this process. The actions of this government have compromised the confidence in our democracy in the province of Ontario when they had the chance to fix it. And yet we have this promise that something is going to happen.

Well, this is a news flash for the Liberal government of Ontario: Nobody trusts the Liberal government anymore, especially the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I do appreciate this opportunity to offer a two-minute reply—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'm sorry. Hang on.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You spoke in debate. It has to be somebody else. Sorry.

The member from Davenport—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Are we all done doing my job now? Thanks.

The member from Davenport, two minutes.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: That's correct. I'll speak now, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

It gives me pleasure to stand up and weigh in on this debate that has been going on here this afternoon—a very lively debate, may I add.

There had been a point of order that was really not a point of order, brought forward by the member across about something that my colleague from Kitchener Centre had brought forward, and I just wanted to provide some clarification on that. What she was referring to is something that I believe the member across had already referenced in his deputation, so he should have really been quite aware and quite up to speed as to what it was she was referencing. She was saying that we, the government, will be bringing forward an amendment to ban fundraising events for all MPPs, candidates, party leaders, nomination contestants and leadership contestants. This had already been brought forward. It had already been addressed by the member opposite.

I think that what we are trying to do here and continue to do is be as open and transparent as possible with regard to this piece of legislation and, frankly, with all pieces of legislation that we bring forward here. We want to make sure that rules on fundraising will be applied equally to all political parties.

I look forward to seeing that all political parties on all sides of the House will be adhering to the new fundraising rules once they become final legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, I called out for a point of order because the member had said that the banning of MPPs from attending fundraisers was included in the bill, which of course it is not. But just for clarification purposes, we also heard, in the member from Kitchener Centre's comments, that she went farther, once again, and said, "Fundraisers will be banned." Of course, I've gone through the bill and I've not seen any reference to banning fundraisers, but we have heard the minister saying that members will be banned from attending fundraisers. I guess the bill just continues to expand in

the minds of the Liberal caucus here. One of the reasons for that, of course, is this unconventional manner in which they're proceeding with this bill.

But I do want to make reference to the debate that we've heard so far, and that was that the Liberal member mentioned about fundraisers. Really, this bill is not about raising the ethical performance or the morality around fundraisers. What this is all about is that the Liberal Party got caught in scandalous behaviour with cash-for-access fundraisers. What Bill 2 is attempting to do—and what the Liberal government is attempting to do with it—is not raise the bar, but they want everybody else now to wear the dirty laundry that's been exposed during the cash-for-access scandals. That's what this is all about. That's why the bill now goes on to capture candidates. People who are not even elected to office will be having to abide by the same performance level as cabinet ministers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Two-minute response: the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. Marie-France Lalonde: As you can see, this is bringing a lot of discussion, and I think it's a good discussion. It's a healthy debate. And do you know what? I've been in politics for the past two years, so I'm a newbie, if I can say so, compared to some of the other members who have been serving their communities a lot longer than me. But one thing that I want to say to the people of my community of Ottawa–Orléans is that I am very happy about those changes in the sense that some of those rules have been made from a federal perspective before us, and I think the people of Ontario expect us, as legislators, as parliamentarians, to move towards that direction. So it gives me pleasure, actually, to stand here. But do I feel that I've done anything wrong before? No. I followed the rules, just like my colleagues in this House.

One thing that I'm looking forward to is continuing the debate on this bill. The members opposite were making clarifications, but I have to say that the committee went throughout the province and had the opportunity to hear back from Ontarians. It's clear that our constituents—most people—are expecting us to change those rules. That's why our Premier made those decisions. I look forward to seeing them implemented, and hopefully it will receive support from our colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and to add to the debate on Bill 2, the Election Finances Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016. There are a few elements of the bill that I would like to focus on during my time this afternoon, including the government's sudden change of heart when it comes to placing limits on third-party advertising, after voting against it multiple times, as well as their decision to award themselves millions of public dollars to fix the problem of unethical, at best, and corrupt, at worst, fundraising practices.

At the same time, discussing any of the elements within the bill may prove to be a waste of time because the Attorney General himself admitted that the bill is

incomplete and that we will see lots of changes to this piece of legislation in the committee stage. At least the Liberals are being honest when they say that they're going to do whatever they want anyway.

1630

We're discussing fundraising reform because the Liberals were caught engaging in incredibly unethical fundraising practices. Here's a description of the events from the *Globe and Mail*:

"Corporate executives and entrepreneurs who did business with the province would pony up as much as \$10,000 for the chance to bend a minister's ear over a glass of wine at an exclusive fundraiser. The party even set quotas for how much money cabinet ministers were to raise from stakeholders in the departments they oversaw.

"The cash-for-access scheme was a clear conflict of interest, to the point that at least one former Liberal cabinet minister said he left politics because of it."

The exposure of these fundraising schemes is why we are discussing the issue today, not a sudden desire to do the right thing on the part of the government. They're only trying to clean up this mess because someone caught on to their scheme. Bill 2 is an opportunity to tackle a key issue. But does the bill accomplish real change?

Mr. Speaker, one element of the bill that I'd like to spend a few minutes discussing is the provision in Bill 2 to regulate third-party advertising in Ontario. Back in 2013, I introduced the private member's bill seeking to place the same limits on third-party advertising that the vast majority of other provinces, as well as the federal government, already had in place. Limits on third-party advertising were called for by the Ontario Chief Electoral Officer numerous times, but each plea was ignored by the Liberals because they felt they had a good thing going and that there was no need to protect our democracy since the system worked in their favour.

The Minister of Transportation completely dismissed the notion that Ontario's rules needed updating. He felt things were just fine the way they were. That's hardly surprising, given how he ended up in the position of power he's in. He transported a lot of bags of money to the Liberal Party over the years. The minister stated that there was simply no need to regulate third-party advertising because, "The reforms and the regime that exist currently in Ontario do strike the right balance between transparency and free speech."

Another government member stated last year that limiting third-party advertising "is really dangerous, in the fact that it limits third parties from getting involved in the democratic process, in advertising."

The member went on to state, "There may be other groups that want to get out there and speak, and to limit them to a certain financial amount is not really the right thing to do."

Well, Speaker, I look forward to the Minister of Transportation and other members who clearly stated that they're against limiting third-party advertising speaking out against this government's bill—unless, of course, they have flip-flopped.

Mr. Speaker, the very author of this bill has had a few flip-flops when it comes to his position on fundraising and democratic reform. The Attorney General was one of the Liberal MPPs that voted against placing restrictions on third-party advertising, not once, not twice, but three times. He first voted against placing limits on third-party advertising in 2011, on a bill presented by my colleague the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, and again in 2013, when he voted against my bill, and a third time in 2015, when he voted against a bill brought forward by the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Now the minister has flip-flopped and is in favour of third-party advertising limits, which he voted against multiple times in the past. I'd like to congratulate the minister on finally recognizing a good idea; it's better late than never.

The entire reform process has been treated as a joke by this government from the very beginning, when the Premier announced she wrote her government's plan by herself at home over the weekend.

Interjection: On a napkin.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: From that moment on it was clear that changes to our democracy would be dictated from the Liberals, not decided upon collaboratively. And as it's been added, she wrote that on the back of a napkin.

And what did Premier Wynne suggest we do to fix the problem of the Wynne Liberals selling themselves off—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, one member isn't in her seat and the other member is extremely vocal. Maybe we'll cut it back a bit over there? Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Let me go back to that previous sentence. From that moment on, it was clear that the changes to our democracy would be dictated from the Liberals, not decided upon collaboratively.

What did Premier Wynne suggest we do to fix the problem of the Wynne Liberals selling themselves off for intimate dinners? The Premier actually suggested that her party should be given millions of dollars from taxpayers in the form of a per-vote subsidy. The *Globe and Mail* estimates that the Liberal Party of Ontario alone would receive more than \$5 million per year as a result of a generous per-vote subsidy. It's beyond parody at this point, Speaker. Premier Wynne and her government got caught with their hands in the cookie jar and their recommendation was that they should be able to take all the cookies.

Not only is this government trying to ignore the problems like toddlers and insist they've done nothing wrong, they're even referring to their cash grab of tax dollars as an "allowance." I'm not sure how many people in Ontario would refer to \$5 million as an allowance, but it does show just how the Ontario Liberals really do consider tax dollars their fun money.

Nurses are being let go. The government's going to war with doctors and trying to cut their pay. Yet there are apparently millions of dollars just lying around that can be sent directly to political parties. That is unacceptable.

It once again goes to show how the Liberals have lost their way and somewhere along the line started caring more about their own political futures and filling the pockets of political hacks than the future of this province, and it's shameful. It sends a terrible message to anyone in this province who has had to deal with cutbacks. There is plenty of money for Premier Wynne and her party, but no money for you, the taxpayer. Is that the message our government should send to its people?

Only in Kathleen Wynne's Ontario would charity groups need to fundraise while political parties receive millions of dollars from the public purse. It's hardly surprising that the Liberals want the payouts to be based on the 2014 election results instead of future elections, as their popularity has plummeted over the last two years. They will receive much more money under that vote tally than they likely would if the payouts reflected current levels of support.

As a matter of fact, recent polls have pegged the Liberal Party falling to 25% support, down from the 39% of the vote they received in 2014. The Premier currently has an astonishing disapproval rate of 74%.

Further complicating matters is the fact that the Liberals have already lost one seat since the 2014 election; they may lose a few more seats between now and the next general election. Would the Liberals receive a payout for seats they no longer hold? I think that's a question, actually, that will have to be answered. We can only assume that the government will opt for a system that gives the maximum payout to the Liberal Party of Ontario. Ultimately, we can only guess, as the government has already stated that this bill will be rewritten as they see fit anyway. So who knows what snap changes they will introduce without warning or consultation?

One of the snap changes that this government has made came when they announced they would prevent all provincial politicians from going to fundraisers. They would still be allowed to make phone calls to ask for money. They could still personally sell tickets for the events but would not be allowed to physically attend them. This change makes little sense. It would not stop the worst abuses that have happened under this Liberal government in regard to selling access to ministers, and it is unsurprising that no other Canadian jurisdiction at any level of government has gone forward with such a policy.

The Liberals pretend that local fundraisers such as community barbecues for individual backbench MPPs hold the same weight as thousand-dollar fundraisers where industry insiders talk privately with ministers who can sign off on billion-dollar deals. Also, does it really solve the problem if many of the ministers' senior staff or policy advisers attend these cash-for-access events instead of the ministers themselves? Clearly not.

1640

A *Globe and Mail* editorial questioned how anyone could believe such a change would make any difference at all: "Do the Liberals now expect anyone to believe that, just because a cabinet minister can't attend a fundraiser, he or she won't be beholden to major donors?"

If donations are being actively traded for favours, what possible difference can it make whether or not a cabinet minister is present when a cheque is written?" Even the Premier's reasoning for this sudden change is questionable.

A *Globe and Mail* report stated the following: "Asked to explain her sudden change of heart, Ms. Wynne said she decided to bring forward the fundraiser ban because opposition proposals to end cash-for-access did not go far enough. The Premier said opposition amendments to the bill covered only cabinet ministers and not all MPPs. Her claim, however, appears to be incorrect: Out of four cash-for-access amendments from the Progressive Conservatives and the NDP, two would have applied to all MPPs."

Many have asked why the Liberal government is running this fundraising reform instead of Elections Ontario, given that they're in a position to rig the system in their favour. That's exactly what they're trying to do, but don't just take my word for it, Speaker. Listen to the serious concerns raised by Ontario's Auditor General.

Last month, the *Toronto Star* reported that, according to the Auditor General, "Ontario's Liberal government would enjoy a 'political advantage' over rivals under Premier Kathleen Wynne's proposed campaign financing reforms."

The *Star*'s report on the Auditor General's warning went on to say, "While there are spending limits on advertising for opposition parties and lobby groups in terms of advertising six months before and during elections, there are no such restrictions on the government....

"There is an advantage to the governing party if it is able to advertise on any issue, at any time prior to an election, and at any cost in the guise of government advertising." That was said by Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk.

Speaker, what's worse is that the Liberals recently stripped the Auditor General's power to decide which ads are partisan and which are acceptable for government to run on. A freedom-of-information request filed by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation revealed that the government spent nearly \$600,000 advertising the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan during the federal election campaign alone. Overall, initial estimates have stated that the Wynne Liberals spent roughly \$2 million on ads promoting the Ontario pension plan that never came into existence. Prime-time ads do not come cheaply. These millions of dollars were spent promoting a pension plan that did not even see a single cent go to Ontario seniors.

Shifting gears, a *Globe and Mail* article on the report stated, "Ontarians have paid \$37 billion more than market price for electricity over eight years and will pay another \$133 billion extra by 2032 as a result of haphazard planning and political meddling, a report from the Auditor General says. The Liberal government has repeatedly overruled expert advice ... in favour of political decisions that drove up power costs for consumers."

Why would a government possibly overrule expert advice and drive up energy costs for their own citizens? I liken it to, "Don't confuse me with facts. My mind is made up."

Where are these extra billions and billions of dollars going? Where is the money going? We may never know.

On an unrelated note, it was revealed today that Premier Wynne is planning a \$1,000-per-person fundraiser on October 6 at a Toronto office of Menergy Corp., a Chinese energy company.

We know two things: (1) Ontarians have paid billions in extra electricity costs, and (2) the Ontario Liberals have made hundreds of thousands of dollars off of secret fundraisers with the energy sector. And these are just a few of the fundraisers that we know about.

The Liberals were, of course, caught red-handed—an interesting phrase, "red-handed"—earlier this year selling access to ministers of the crown to the highest bidder in secret.

The Premier was then crystal clear when she vowed that never again would the Ontario Liberal Party hold a secret fundraiser. She promised that her party would disclose each and every fundraiser, especially ones attended by ministers commanding hundreds and sometimes over \$1,000 for a special night.

Not many people trusted this promise at that time, and it didn't take long for the government to break this promise of transparency. Liberals were caught breaking their own rules just yesterday. As transparent as mud, as I would describe it, Speaker.

The *Toronto Star* reported yesterday that "Premier Kathleen Wynne has ordered the Liberals to stop attending private fundraisers—they define the events as public if they are posted on the Liberal Party website.

"But Progressive Conservative Todd Smith noted in question period Tuesday that a \$700-per-ticket fundraiser with Energy Minister Glenn Thibeault and Transportation Minister Steven Del Duca on October 5 wasn't posted online."

The minister offered a laughable justification by saying that even though the secret fundraiser was not publicly listed when he was called out by the member for Prince Edward-Hastings, the fact that he made it public after the secret fundraiser was exposed somehow meant that it was never a secret. Oh, "that" secret fundraiser? He was just about to tell the public about it. "I was just about to tell the public about it," he went on to say, "and I promise." Does that make any sense to those watching at home? Does anybody buy that?

As I wind down my remarks, I would like to state that I am disappointed that this government is wasting a chance to build our democracy for the better. Bill 2 is what happens when a government is more interested in protecting themselves than our institutions. Just like many other issues in Ontario, cash-for-access was not a real problem until it started to hurt the popularity of the Premier.

Bill 2 deals with a serious issue. Secret fundraisers and selling cash-for-access to ministers has damaged the public's trust in our democracy. The fact that so many people in Ontario feel that their government has been bought and paid for is a shame. By so clearly losing this opportunity to strengthen the integrity of our

democracy—one that would outlast each and every one of us and should be our top priority—the government has once again shown that their true concern is the financial well-being of the Liberal Party of Ontario. Everything else, Speaker, comes second.

To truly tackle the problem of selling access to ministers for cash, a public inquiry should expose all of the wrongdoings of this government.

I can hardly wait to hear further what this government has to say pertaining to Bill 2.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's my honour to join in the debate.

Bill 2, the Election Finance Statute Law Amendment Act, needs to be put into context. The reason this bill was brought about, as many members have raised, was because the government was found to be engaging in activities that were perceived to be improper. Some of them are perceived in a very—one could infer the impropriety very clearly. The clearest example is this: The sell-off of Hydro One does not benefit the province of Ontario at all. In fact, we have very independent evidence that suggests it puts our province in a worse financial position. It does not actually allow us to fundraise or raise funds for transit or infrastructure. It does not do that, and that suggestion flies in the face of the evidence. It flies in the face of the evidence.

The government says that we're going to do this sell-off not for the benefit of the people of Ontario but for the benefit of a small group of bankers and lawyers called a syndicate.

Now, this very same group called the syndicate turns around and does a fundraiser for the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Energy, the very two ministers responsible for facilitating the sale of Hydro One. That was something that was seen to be very troublesome. The Integrity Commissioner said that a reasonable person would be led to believe that this was a conflict of interest. It's these types of activities that we wanted to stop, but the government is doing nothing to actually stop those activities.

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In addition, the government can continue to spend public dollars on partisan government ads that the Auditor General has deemed she would not have approved if she was still allowed to have the power to say yes or no to these ads. The government got rid of that ability for the Auditor General and they are moving away from transparency; and this bill, again, is not going to address the problem.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to speak in support of the proposed Election Finances Statute Law Amendment Act.

I want to remind the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex about his comment earlier. Our government and this party already have real-time reporting of donations

for the past five years. So just in case he forgot that, we already have a mechanism right now to ensure timely reporting of all donations. Maybe the opposition should consider that piece as well.

But the bigger piece here about the proposed legislation: I was attending those public hearings during the summer to hear from Ontarians across the province. I attended some of the hearings. We heard very loud and clear that they do want election finance reform. They also told us they will support the whole issue of a per-vote contribution to the parties. But more importantly, I think the time has come for more transparency, and with the proposed legislation, if passed, there will be more transparency in terms of the legislative process.

At the same time, I want to hear from the third party and their views about the whole issue of corporate—but, more importantly, the ban of union donations, because we know that when we ban all donations, especially the corporate and union ones, there will be implications for all parties, not just on the government party's side.

The other piece here is that at the end of the day we want to make sure there's transparency. There's been express concern from the member opposite, the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, about the whole issue of the so-called buying-for-access piece. I would challenge him because I know, from my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, that's not the case. The Premier and others have visited my riding. There is no donation, there is no access issue. There are ministers coming to my riding; they're all there for free.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I am very concerned about the legality of the amendment that they're talking about, that the member from Kitchener Centre talked about earlier, that the government has proposed and has let the other parties know.

So to put a hypothetical situation: I'm an independent candidate, not a candidate for any party. I have not signed any papers. I have declared to the public in my riding that I am running for the seat. What can the government do to prevent me, an independent, private citizen, from having a fundraiser to raise money for my campaign? Absolutely nothing. In this country, we all expect to be treated equally under the law. So if you can't do something about an independent citizen who simply declares, "I will be a candidate for the seat in Davenport"—nothing to stop me from going around having fundraisers and raising money. I don't belong to any party.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Like John Turmel.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The John Turmels of the world: What are you going to do to stop them? They don't have to register as a candidate until about 15 days before the election, so they could be raising money for months saying, "I'm going to be an independent candidate." Now you've created an unlevel playing field where an independent candidate can work under one set of rules and the members of a party have to work under

others. I absolutely bet that there will be legal people who will be telling you that the provisions of your amendments are not legal; they will be unconstitutional, they will be challenged, and you will lose them. They will fail.

I think you need to rethink this whole bit of your legislation. You got caught with your hands in the cookie jar, and now you've come up with something that you haven't even really thought out the ramifications of what it might mean—Liberals again tabling legislation on the back of a napkin.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke talked about the napkin escapade, because honestly, that's what I was going to say. Originally, when we look back on the history of this bill, we heard that the Premier was at her table and she had this wonderful idea and just took a napkin and started writing out legislation. That's a concern, and one loophole that she missed—she missed something. She missed allowing the Integrity Commissioner to seek oversight over conflicts of interest.

There have been many times that we have addressed legislation that has come to this Legislature and they have backtracked on it. There's example after example: Ontario seniors' drugs; we pushed for the Ontario Anti-Racism Directorate and now they're finally doing it; the autism file; the child care ratios; the provincial and demonstration schools. So this is not something that should be taken as rhetoric. You, this government, the Wynne government, has put legislation in where you've backtracked.

We're just asking this government, the Wynne government, to look at these suggestions—to seriously look at these suggestions. You're looking at amendments in the future for banning MPPs and candidates from attending their own fundraisers. Now we're asking you—we're negotiating; we're compromising; we're having discussions. This is what debate is about. We're asking you for the Ontario Integrity Commissioner to have oversight on rules of conflict of interest. That is so common sense. That is so no-nonsense legislation. That, you have to consider seriously.

I hope this government is listening when it comes to that. We respect the fact that you've listened to us on other legislation and did a turnaround. Please consider this and do the same thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Chatham—Kent—Essex has two minutes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to thank the members from Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Scarborough—Agincourt, Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke and London—Fanshawe for their insights and how they've added to this debate.

You know, as I listen to the comments and I reflect more on this particular bill, I can't help but think that two words come to mind: double standard. What's good for the goose is good for the gander. I could give you saying after saying as it pertains to this. But my concern is—and

I've mentioned it, and the member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke has mentioned it when he talked about how the Liberal government got caught with their hands in the cookie jar. To take taxpayer money and go back to the election year of 2014 and say, "Listen, we're going to change all of that"—because you can't attend your fundraisers and you can't have pay-for-access. They've already done that. They've already milked the cow dry.

Now they're using taxpayer money, and they know that they're going to line their own pockets. I have to question the motive. Why are they doing that? Is it because, as I mentioned earlier, that perhaps the popularity—

Mr. John Fraser: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. Point of order, member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I just think that the member's use of "lining their own pockets" is imputing motive.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I agree with the member from Ottawa South. You'll retract that part, please.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Continue.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: So, again, looking at why are they doing what they're doing, it's probably because, according to the polls, they're dropping like a rock and they're going to need all the money they can get. Therefore, they want to limit the fundraising activities of the opposition parties and limit the amount of funds that they themselves can bring in. Well, I really question that as well, because to me—now, when it comes to restricting third-party advertising, myself and my colleagues from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and from Haliburton—sorry. I'm trying to think of Mr. Arnott's—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Wellington—Halton Hills.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Right, Wellington—Halton Hills. We introduced legislation that would restrict third-party advertising. Unfortunately, this government shot it down. Now they want to bring it in. They have their reasons for it. Again, I look forward to what may occur in the future with this bill.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always, once again, a true pleasure and privilege to stand on behalf of the good people in Algoma—Manitoulin and talk on this wonderful Bill 2, Election Finances Statute Law Amendment Act, 2016, a bill that had essentially started with the right intentions. What I mean by the right intentions—I'm going to give it to you from the perception of where I'm from, northern Ontario, where individuals recognized that things were going the wrong way. Certain things were happening that weren't on the up and up. Individuals were looking at this, saying, "Listen, there are changes that need to happen."

I really want to give a shout-out to our critic the member from Kitchener-Waterloo who did—

Mr. Randy Hillier: She did a marvellous job.

Mr. Michael Mantha: —a whale of a job.

Mr. Randy Hillier: A whale of a job?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Well, I had an H word that was going to come out, but I'm trying to stop myself. But she did a fantastic job. She went into this with an open mind, really trying to make a right out of a wrong. To my understanding, from my discussions with her, there were well over 157 witnesses who came in and provided some feedback, some input to the government.

I heard many of the Liberal members who stood up here today on many occasions and who indicated that they participated—some of them participated on it and some of them didn't. However, most of them said the key word: "We listened to the people who came to the testimonial." They listened to Ontarians. However, that listening did not materialize in the piece of legislation we're dealing with, which is still a moving target as we speak, because we're not exactly sure what we're debating. We have a pretty good idea, but it's still something that is being developed.

For me to stand here and say I am certain of what I'm speaking about, Mr. Speaker—and I have the amendments in front of me; I know exactly what those changes are going to be—it would be dishonest for me to stand here and say I have that ability.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Because you don't.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I don't; I can't. I can talk in codes, maybe. I can talk around it, and I can make some "maybes," "could haves" and "should haves," but a lot of my comments today are going to be on what brought us to being here today.

I know a lot of my friends—and I have a lot of friends on this side of the House and I have friends on the other side of the House as well. I pride myself on working and building bridges because I think essentially all 107 of us are here to do what's right for Ontarians. That's our role. That's what we're supposed to be doing here. I know there are a lot of people in this House, on both sides of the House, who are not comfortable in their seats talking about this particular piece of legislation. That's a fact because nobody knows where this is going to go, but everybody understands what got us here. We don't like how we got here because that's a tough discussion, because that really means that we have to reflect and look at ourselves in the mirror and say, "Well, did I do wrong? Could I have done things differently?"

Are there things we can do to improve the situation? "It's too late now. We're way too far into this discussion to retreat and acknowledge that, listen, together we can make this a lot better." I choose to believe not. I think there is still an opportunity there, and on behalf of myself and the good people across Algoma-Manitoulin, I'm extending that olive branch to my colleagues and say that we can still get this right. There's still an opportunity for us to get this right.

I want to talk a little bit about some of the amendments that our finance critic brought forward along with our caucus. One of those was to ban cash-for-access for tightening conflict-of-interest rules. It's common sense. Why can't we see that happening? Why can't we see that in regulation: ban partisan government advertising and ensure the Auditor General has oversight on advertising? It's common sense, folks. The words we hear today in the media are "transparency" and "accountability." Let's get a reality check. Class 101, that's something we should be doing.

Protect free speech while cracking down on the super PACs' third-party political advertising. Again, that's an automatic. What's the difficulty in getting that done?

New rules for lobbyists and then new rules for conflict of interest—common sense stuff, and that's what people back in my riding of Algoma-Manitoulin understand. These are simple steps we need to do to address those sexy words we see in the media, which are "transparency" and "accountability." It's an automatic. We shouldn't be fighting over that stuff. We shouldn't be playing, pulling and actually hurting each other in building a relationship in order to get these things done, but we're not doing that either.

Let me go on to why we have come to the point that we're in. Because some of us may have done or have done something that was wrong, so we react to what is there in the public because the public is the one that makes us move. The media played a big role in this, and I want to go over many of those media releases that actually guided us or pushed us in this government into where we are today. One said:

"What's missing is a move to restore the Ontario Auditor General's power to veto any government ad deemed partisan in nature. As the Star has noted in the past, the Wynne administration made a serious mistake when it changed the province's landmark Government Advertising Act to remove the auditor's ability to block taxpayer-funded partisan pitches.

"Again, rank self-interest looms as the inescapable motive for watering down the auditor's oversight." The editorial: "Wynne Needs to Fix Flawed Political Reforms," Toronto Star, August 23, 2016.

Let me go on: "But preventing a cabinet minister or opposition critic from personally accepting a cheque tonight doesn't prevent her from meeting privately with the generous donor tomorrow....

"If Ms. Wynne is determined to end the perception that Ontario politicians are selling access, banning politicians from showing their faces at fundraisers won't do the trick." Editorial: "To Fix Ontario Politics, Wynne Must Follow the Money," the Globe and Mail, September 9, 2016.

I've got a few of these, and I think it's really important that we understand and we see a lot of what is being said. This reflects on all of us. This is what people outside of this little bubble that we live in are reading about our dealings here.

"It will probably take a crew of 10 people working for a solid week to remove the skid marks at Queen's Park caused by the Wynne government's sudden U-turn on the issue of cash-for-access political fundraisers....

"The cash-for-access scheme was a clear conflict of interest, to the point that at least one former Liberal cabinet minister said he left politics because of it." Now, that's powerful.

"It's a move that looks less like the zeal of a convert, and more like a petulant act of spite....

"The scandal that forced the Liberals to introduce Bill 201 was not about a local MPP attending a potluck dinner in their riding, where tickets cost \$50. The scandal was the Liberals using their advantage as the governing party to collect large cheques from people seeking favour with cabinet members. It was cabinet members trading access for cash, or giving the appearance of doing so.

"Do the Liberals now expect anyone to believe that, just because a cabinet minister can't attend a fundraiser, he or she won't be beholden to major donors....

"But instead of seeking to focus attention on a demonstrably real problem, Mr. Naqvi is suggesting a blanket ban on MPPs being physically present at fundraising events." The editorial: "On Cash for Access, Have Ontario's Liberals Lost the Plot?" The Globe and Mail, September 1, 2016.

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Why are we here today? They are right there. Outside of our bubble, that's what people are reading. That's how we're being painted—every single one of us in this room. It doesn't matter what side of the hall you are on. It goes on, and there is more:

"Now, by suddenly proposing banning any MPP from attending any political fundraiser, Mr. Naqvi has further exposed the depths of Liberal cynicism. Equating a backbencher's annual barbecue with the 150-odd cash-for-access fundraisers held by Kathleen Wynne and her senior ministers smears all politicians as crass influence peddlers." Every one of us is painted with that brush.

"The average MPP holding a \$100-a-ticket potluck has little direct power and those who attend such events know it. They are there to support an individual and his or her agenda in an entirely legitimate manifestation of the democratic process. When the energy minister invites a few electricity-sector executives to a private dinner in exchange for thousands of dollars in donations, however, you know said executives don't show up to talk about the weather."

There's more. "Everything about the Wynne government's handling of the cash-for-access scandal reveals its true colours. Elected on the strength of what Ontarians believed to be her honest and consensual approach, she has shown herself to be a political operator willing to go head-to-head in"—oh, I don't know that; that's too French for me—"subterfuge, favouritism and manipulation with the best of them."

Another quote: "In fact, cash-for-access as the Liberals practised it was a relatively new fundraising tactic, one they milked to the maximum....

"The Wynne Liberals acted arrogantly in first insisting there was nothing unseemly about their shakedowns. Now, they're trying to equate them with backyard barbecues of a low-ranking backbencher. With the Liberals, it seems one sophism just begets another."

Konrad Yakabuski: "How Long Can the Ontario Liberals Go?"

Ms. Catherine Fife: "How Low."

Mr. Michael Mantha: Oh, yes, you're right: "How Low Can the Ontario Liberals Go? Just Watch Them." The Globe and Mail, September 2016.

I've got some more. "As they have from the beginning of this controversy, the Liberals are acting unilaterally, using their majority government to shove meaningful participation by the opposition parties aside.

"And they appear to be developing these plans on the fly, on the back of a napkin.

"To say skepticism of the Liberals' new-found reformist zeal is warranted would be an understatement." The editorial: "Wynne Has Seen the Light ... Honest!" Toronto, September 1, 2016.

"Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk says that the Liberals are still set to benefit from this new regime, compared to the other parties, simply because of government advertising that, well, is but thinly veiled Liberal advertising. The Liberals also have revoked Lysyk's ability to kibosh overtly partisan ads. So that's a problem." Editorial: "Half-Measures on Ontario Fundraising Must Stop." The Ottawa Citizen, August 24.

And there's lots more, Mr. Speaker. There's lots more. *Interjection.*

Mr. Michael Mantha: Well, you know, it is disappointing that we've stooped to this level; it is. It is unfortunate that we can't find a way through this, because we are all painted with that brush—every single one of us.

I take my role seriously here when I'm at Queen's Park. I go back to my riding and I always take that role and I always tell individuals that I am not working just with my caucus members; I work with the 107 people that are here. Every single one of us in this room wants to see better health care. Every single one of us wants to see better education. Every single one of us wants to see better roads. Every single one of us wants to assist everybody and anybody back home. Because that's what we're here for. We're here to enact legislation that will actually benefit people back home and Ontarians, but we're squabbling over this kind of stuff. We're squabbling over issues that really aren't going to benefit or enhance the lives of individuals back home. But by the same token, we're stymying debate on certain issues that are of importance to those back home. That's a part of my job that I really get frustrated with.

Again, when we sit and we listen and we partake and we bring forward constituents from across the province—unfortunately, those meetings are always here in Toronto—we don't always expand and use the opportunities that we have to work together as a group and go out and reach out to all parts of this province, where we can

have a true reflection of the decisions that we need to make to benefit their lives.

We stand here and we squabble and we're really not helping ourselves as far as our bubble, as far as being exemplary individuals as politicians. That's the reality. That's why we have these types of strokes that are painted on us each and every day that we stand here. That's why each and every one of us, when we go back to the riding and we look at some of those individuals, gets that—and I know each and every one of you gets it—when they look at you and they say, "You're just like all of them. You're a politician just like all of them." That's what we all hear, and none of you can deny that. We get that because we cannot find a way of doing things right for Ontarians. That's what frustrates me about this job.

But I'm going to continue building my bridges and continue working with all sides of the House because that's what I was elected to do. I hope that someday we can get through this.

We have an opportunity to get this one right. It's not done. It's not created yet. That's the bonus. That's the nice thing. You're still drafting it—whether on the back of a napkin, whether on a desk, I really don't care. We have an opportunity to do it right. We have an opportunity to show Ontarians that you don't have to be cynical about your politicians.

We are going to get this right. We are going to work together to make sure that we could use those words in true honesty and say that we are being transparent. We are going to be accountable to you, Ontarians. We're not going to worry about what we feel is right, but we are going to make sure that we serve you.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I have a lot more to say when it comes to our day-to-day responsibilities that we have here, but I see that my time is coming down.

There is so much more of importance that we could be doing. This should have been dealt with a long time ago. Yes, there are certain things that we need to address: the access; the donations, as to where they're coming from, how they're coming, the amounts. But we can do it in a much better arena and we can do it in a much better way, working together, getting this done.

I'm done for today, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to speak after the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, who I have a great deal of respect for. I'm sure that we agree on many more things than we have differences.

We have got to this point—and the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton used the word "perception," which I think the member from Algoma-Manitoulin mentioned as well in his remarks, to some extent, and elaborated on a little bit. You know, someone once told me that Ford will never say, "GM's cars will kill you," because what that says is, "Cars will kill you." They do that because they don't want to damage the category. But what we do here every day is we damage the category.

Mr. Randy Hillier: The things you guys do every day.

Mr. John Fraser: With all due respect to the member opposite, I'm saying something that I very seriously believe. The way we talk to each other here, how we ascribe motive to each other, is what leads us to that thing the member from Algoma-Manitoulin articulated so clearly, which is that back home the perception of all of us is that this is what we do, and it is not. It is not. It is not what we do. I don't believe that of any member in this House, on this side or the other side.

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Where we're at right now through a series of escalations—and there are rational arguments to be made for all those things that are now in play. I'd like to share the wish of the member from Algoma-Manitoulin that we'll be able to get this thing right. I think it's important that we do. We also have to recognize that we have real-time reporting here; we've had that for five or six years. We have had transparency.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: It's so interesting to hear the member from Ottawa South talk about damaging the category. I know that he does care. I'm on the committee with him for a code of conduct for MPPs and I know that he worries about our reputation and he does take it very seriously. But what I would remind him is that what damages the reputation of politicians is what they do with the valuable taxpayer dollars that they're given, and it's a bit rich coming from this government. People are desperate for home care. They're desperate for health care. They're desperate for long-term care. And they're seeing not thousands, not millions, but billions of dollars being wasted, and they know exactly where that money could have gone to better use.

We're talking today, though, about election financing. As somebody who is fairly new to what I don't like to call the game—but it is a bit of a game. We all have to admit that. It is a competitive place. It's a party system. We need to fundraise to finance our campaigns. In some ridings it's a little more expensive to run than in other ridings, and it's not easy to fundraise. We are all aware of that. But the fact is that on this side of the House we are not able to sell lucrative government contracts.

We're seeing the government now back down from their green energy plan, which saw people become millionaires almost overnight and donate a portion of that money to the Liberal Party. We are not able to do that on this side of the House, so to strangle us in our fundraising efforts, which is part of politics—and I think that of everybody who donated to my past political campaigns, I have yet to have one person say that they wish they hadn't. I want to thank them for their support, thank them for their future support and thank them for the honour of serving them here in the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: One of the things that I think is very important to distinguish, and the member touched on this—and I think it's very important for us to understand this—is that there is a colossal gap that divides the influence of members in government and those not in government, but more than that, those who form the cabinet.

In all circumstances, wherever someone has more influence or more power, we also expect that they have a heightened responsibility. That goes hand in hand. There is a certain prestige and a certain honour and a certain responsibility to being in cabinet. When there are allegations of paying for access, that troubles because it casts aspersions on the seriousness and the responsibility of the position.

In addition, what's also left out in this discussion—and I want to highlight this—is that the election financing bill creates a whole host of new problems. In solving one problem—and the bill does address some very clear issues like corporate and union donations. But it creates a whole new area of problems when it addresses community groups, groups in the community that are concerned with various issues. I'll give you two examples.

If there are seniors in a particular community who want to advertise and say the party that addresses seniors' issues is the party that you should vote for, or, like we've seen, the autism community come together to address issues around this government's lack of funding and, in fact, heinous actions towards the autistic community or people suffering with autism, that coalition of community members is limited so much that they could barely afford a quarter-page ad in the Toronto Star. That would be the extent of what they're allowed to do in an election period.

These are some serious questions where we have a government that is allowed to do whatever they want with public financing and public dollars in the form of government ads.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker. I would, first of all, commend our honourable colleague from Bramalea—Gore—Malton. I believe he's actually diminishing the influence that he holds not only here in Parliament but with the NDP. I understand he was recruited for helping to elect NDP members across the country, not only federally but in Alberta. I think each and every one of the individuals who are in this House has a voice to raise and ideas which are eminently worth supporting as we form the conversation and policies. So I would respectfully disagree with him—that he should not sell himself short in terms of influence he wields.

We're attempting, Speaker, as you've seen—it is a controversial and difficult area—to bring some measure of transparency, accountability, levelling the playing field. I think one issue that doesn't seem to be mentioned here is the per-vote subsidy: that the more votes you're able to draw, that is the amount of money that will come your way in terms of monies received post-election.

Ultimately, if the same rule is applied to each party and we ourselves are limiting our own fundraiser capacities as well as yours, is that not an attempt to level the playing field?

Similarly, with the honourable member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, in a Trumpesque tirade with regard to these mythical independent candidates who may suddenly end up becoming elected members—bring it on. Who are these mythical independent candidates who can suddenly generate extraordinary amounts of money and therefore not be subject to our particular rules 15 days before the election? I think that was, as usual, a red herring from that particular member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Algoma—Manitoulin has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Mantha: With those comments, partisanship is alive and well, I can tell.

I want to thank the members from Etobicoke North, Bramalea—Gore—Malton, Thornhill and Ottawa South. Thank you for listening to some of the comments and not addressing any of them in your responses. It's really nice to hear that you guys are listening.

I really do want to stress one point. There's a Liberal majority right now. That's a fact, and it is definitely undermining the process as far as getting things amended, changed or improved. Like I said, our critic participated on these committees. She, along with other honourable members in this House, entered into a process that—for full value—believed that it was going to go to actually address the issues that they had been dealing with, listened to the 157 witnesses who had been brought forward, brought forward their ideas, suggested their amendments. Every single one of them was shot down.

When I hear, unfortunately, from the government members, Liberal members, that they're listening—are you hearing what is happening at these meetings? Are you actually putting them on paper so that they're reflecting what people are coming forward and bringing those ideas—because we're putting them to you. We are putting them into a format of amendment, and they're not being reflected in the legislation that you have yet to put on the table, which is yet to be determined, which is still a moving target. We're not sure what we're still debating here today. That's a problem, and that's undermining the process; indeed it is.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, from the outset, let me thank you for allowing me to join the debate. I'll let you know that I'll be sharing my time this afternoon with the member for Durham, the member for Trinity—Spadina and the Minister of Housing and poverty reduction.

I've only been in the House a short time this afternoon, having been in other meetings, but I came in for the tail end of the comments from the member from Algoma—Manitoulin. I believe he was speaking with some sincerity when he was putting forward the concerns he expressed.

I'm in my 32nd year of elected office, Speaker. In those periods of time, you meet a variety of people who have different ideological views than you. But I have to say that in those 32 years, I've met very, very few people who I think were in politics for the wrong reason. I think the vast majority of people I see from both parties, and certainly on this side of the House—and even the people who run and aren't successful—are doing it for the right reason. Those are the sort of people you want to attract to politics. All along the way, in the 32 years I've seen the fundraising rules change, what was okay in the past simply isn't okay today.

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The rules have changed along the way. People have demanded more transparency. They've demanded that they know a little bit more about the system. With the advent of social media, that's allowed us to be more transparent, to communicate with people. It's also allowed people access to information they probably could not have obtained in the past. The technology has just improved to that point.

When this debate gets into something about, "You did this, and you said this. You spent money doing this," I simply haven't seen it, Speaker. I haven't seen it from the opposition parties and I haven't seen it from the government. I've seen certain people act in a way that I think would be untoward, but I certainly have never seen people who have actually gone out and done some of the things that people are accusing all of us of doing.

I think we've got good people. Most of them pay their taxes. Most of them come forward for the right reasons. They're ordinary citizens. They earn a good wage. They often leave businesses, they sell businesses to come here. The reality of politics, though, is that at election time people start spending money. We try to outspend each other. We try to out-advertise each other. We want the best brochures. We want the most volunteers. We want the most phones. We want the most central office. It's perfectly normal what we do. We go out and, for a very short period of time, we try to attract the attention of the public and we tell them what we would do if we were in office.

Some of the aspersions that are being cast around the room, around the House, I think are beneath this House for most people.

I think what we should do, or what I'd like to do—and I'm hoping my colleagues will do—is really focus on the changes that are being asked for here, the changes that have come forward. People have looked at other jurisdictions around the country and over the past few years at the federal level and in other jurisdictions. We've seen it drift away from the allowance of corporate donations and the allowance of union donations, for example. At one time, that was considered perfectly proper and part of the way things were done. By today's standards, it simply doesn't meet the test. It doesn't meet the test of public opinion.

When we see the large fundraisers that used to be—you can even go back to the days of Sir John A. Mac-

donald and others, when everyone would rally in the centre of town. I'm sure there was a little bit of fundraising that went on back then. That's how you interacted with your stakeholders. That's what you did.

Over the summer months, there were hearings that took place. I wasn't part of them, but certainly I followed them. We heard from the opposition parties. We had experts in this field come in. We had the general public come in. We came in with some amendments that we thought reflected what people were asking us to do. What they were asking us to do was to be very clear what you mean by third-party advertising, get a very clear definition of it, strengthen the limits for government advertising before an election so it couldn't be used to anybody's advantage, work with all political parties to develop a code of conduct and lower the contribution limits even further. It seems to me that what we have before us today are things that do that, things that are going to strengthen the democratic institutions. They are rules that are brought forward to level the playing field, so that we're all operating by the same rules. I have no problem with that.

The amendments that are coming forward are what we're hearing the public wants, what we're hearing can be applied to all of us equally and should apply, obviously, to all political parties. I would hope nobody would argue with that. I think it's more reflective of changing times, of the ability to fundraise. We've got mailing lists now. We've got people who call on a regular basis. Fundraising is a bit of an art and a bit of a science as well, and we all use fundraisers. The fact we're trying to point fingers at each other and say, "Well, you've done this worse, or you've done this," that just simply hasn't been the experience.

What I've found is, politicians I've worked with from all three political parties are the sort of people I'd like to see getting elected. When they come here, I think they do their best. I think we diminish ourselves by some of the comments. If there are criticisms about the rules—they don't go far enough, maybe they go too far—that type of debate is the sort of debate we need on this issue. What I don't think we need is the needling of each other and the to and fro that really diminishes this place and all the people in it.

Speaker, I obviously will be supporting the act as it moves forward—or the bill, as it moves forward to become an act. I'd ask all members to put forward whatever suggestions they have that would perhaps allow for some change. That's what I'd like to hear. When I do come here, I do listen. When I have the opportunity to, I try to work with members of the opposition on private members' bills, on committee work, that type of thing; because I think when we do that it raises us all. It raises the opposition parties and it raises the government side as well.

So I'd ask members to perhaps concentrate on what the changes are, whether they be good or bad in the opinion of the members, but to leave the personal stuff out. Because my experience, as I said, over the past 32

years, is that very few and far between is the number of people who entered Canadian politics for the wrong reasons, and I don't think any of them are in this House today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): The member from Durham has the floor.

Mr. Granville Anderson: I am so honoured to rise in this House and speak to Bill 2. I would like to thank the Minister of Labour and especially the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for their comments here this afternoon, comments that were to the point.

None of us who are elected in this House, I would believe, are here for the wrong reasons. We're here to serve and do what's in the best interest of our community. This bill goes towards that. It goes towards the integrity of all members. This bill came about because of various reasons.

Before I became elected I was a member of a riding association, and I had ministers coming out to my fundraising events. They came out whether it was for \$100 or \$50 or \$200. They didn't come out because of any selling of access or allowing access to any particular group. They came out because it's a part of the democratic process. They came out because they wanted to have people such as myself elected, and it provided a tool by which to do so, a tool that we all need. It's something we do in all parties: We fundraise. We fundraise with integrity and we fundraise because it's a necessary part of the democratic process. We all do it.

So I am a bit mystified as to why there is this uproar that it's for access. It's not that you're paying for access. People don't pay for access. They come out, they have a good time, they socialize and they interact. They exchange ideas that make the whole province better and make this country better in general.

So, Mr. Speaker, from where I'm coming from, these changes have come about to make the process transparent, and to make sure the public knows that when you meet with a minister, it's not because you want to sell access or you want a special program or advance a special cause. They're doing this to educate and enlighten the community as to what government is all about. That's what ministers talk about. They talk about the things we are doing to enhance this province and to enhance the well-being of every citizen in this province.

From where I'm coming from, I don't believe any minister—not on this side of the House—is meeting with any particular group to sell access or to provide access for any political gain, other than the enrichment of our community and the enrichment of society.

These changes, I see them—we don't have to agree with all of them. This bill is going to go to committee. It's going to go out for consultation. As a government, we do listen, and we're going to listen to the people, and we're going to make this bill the best bill possible to benefit all Ontarians and to enhance and enrich the process in this province. There will be opportunity to modify the bill, to make it better. We will accept submissions from the public, from both political parties

and from all interested parties to make this the best bill and to make this something that we can all live with, and progress, enhance and enrich the democratic process in this province and in this country.

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Again, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting this bill. I encourage all members of this House to support this bill. It's not a perfect bill, but we're going to make this a bill that enhances and enriches this place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bill Walker): Now I turn to the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Han Dong: I am very pleased to have this opportunity to speak to this bill. This is actually a very important and, I think, a very sensitive bill. Members from both sides are giving their perceptions on this bill.

I just want to tell the viewers in front of the TV my view on this bill and how fundraisers work. Every member in this House was elected and does fundraisers. You can't tell me that you don't fundraise and you can be here today. They know how their fundraisers happen in their ridings.

For my fundraisers, I have family and friends come over and support me because they like me, they believe in me. Then I have people that have particular interests in their communities. They see me as a vehicle to pass on the message to this House, to the government. They can talk to me any time, but they feel that I am a good vehicle for their message; therefore, they want to support me.

So this is the essence of fundraisers, and most of these fundraisers are 50 bucks, or \$100 or \$150. They are very small-value, very affordable, because I believe that this is the—

Interjection.

Mr. Han Dong: Exactly, grassroots fundraisers. These are the essence of our democratic system. I am not from a rich family. I don't have rich relatives. My family is—

Interjections.

Mr. Han Dong: My family has been in Canada for a relatively short period of time, so my network is not as great as some of the members here who have had family here for generations. But it's because of this democratic system that today I have the opportunity to stand in this House and speak to this very, very important bill.

Someone said earlier—I think it was member from Ottawa South—that we have to be very careful when we talk about this bill. We don't want the public out there to think that, "Oh, you politicians are all the same," and cash-for-access and all that stuff. I say that to members across the floor, anyone that talks about fundraisers in that tone, unless in their fundraiser they don't speak and they don't talk about policy, there's nothing wrong with it. They will, perhaps, be seen as doing the same thing—cash-for-access—because they come over to ministers and speak to specific issues, cases, individuals or organizations in their ridings and lobby on their behalf. So, can we say that is cash-for-access? No, I wouldn't categorize that.

I think it is important to realize that there are rules in place, rules on how to advertise for fundraisers. Ministers can't call themselves ministers; they have to be advertised as MPPs, just so everyone is equal. There are rules about how to receipt, how much they can contribute. I want the viewers in front of the TV to realize that there are very strict rules and everyone in this House and their local riding association is subject to the scrutiny of Elections Ontario. That's why we have a very good system, a very democratic system, right as of now.

However, I think we have a good opportunity in front of us. Through the introduction of the election financing act, we can establish a goal to change the way politics are done in Ontario. The Premier actually directed the caucus to stop hosting large-scale fundraisers where ministers interact solely with stakeholders of their portfolio. This is something that we have seen governments prior to this administration and governments at other levels do all the time, and they have done that in the past. I shouldn't say "all the time." The rule has been changed at the federal level. But in the past, that's how things were done.

Again, like I said, these stakeholders have access to ministers any time. Just pick up the phone and if the minister's schedule allows meetings, they will welcome their input. It's not that they only go to fundraisers to speak about their ideas or about a suggestion or whatever perspective they have on their industry. To be honest, at fundraisers—I know the members across the floor know, in their experience—you don't get too many chances to talk to individuals in depth about whatever they want to talk about. It's the same thing as opposition members: If they have a specific issue, they can come to a minister and speak to it.

I want to, again, caution the members of this House, be very careful using the term "cash-for-access," because you are making an allegation. The last time I checked, no honourable member of this House has been charged for things they are alleging, things they are hinting. They should be very, very careful when they use that term.

I listened to the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton. He brought forward a couple of weaknesses of this bill. I want to inform him that we've brought forward comprehensive amendments that will include lowering contribution limits even further, creating a clear definition of third-party advertising—he mentioned third-party advertising; we're bringing forward a clear definition—and strengthening the limits for government advertising before an election.

I think this is very, very important. If you remember, back in 2006, this government, the Liberal government at the time, under the previous Premier, Premier Dalton McGuinty, passed legislation to ban partisan advertising for the government. So I think this bill will further strengthen the limits on government advertising, and this is something that the public wants to see.

Lastly, I just want to say again, rules on fundraising should be equal to all members of all parties. Let's be fair: If we need to fundraise, they need to fundraise. We respect how they fundraise, and I expect the same respect from the members across the aisle.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It was interesting listening to the Minister of Labour lead off. I guess he forgot to mention anything about the quotas and the targets that were set up and broadly exposed in the *Globe and Mail* about ministerial cash-for-access fundraising events, where we had the energy minister—I believe it was a \$500,000 quota. We didn't get to hear from the Minister of Labour what his target or quota was.

It's clear what the game plan from the Liberals is. They've been caught in these black operations of cash for access, and now they want to tarnish everybody in this House with that same tarnish. They want to use a brush to tarnish us all with the activities of the Liberal Party.

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Let me put in context the way I see it: When a large green energy proponent pays \$10,000 to meet with the energy minister, is there something looked for in exchange? I can tell you the difference when a plumbing contractor comes to my barbecue: Whether it's \$500 or \$1,000 that they may contribute to me, the plumbing contractor in Lanark county isn't expecting to get the plumbing contract for Queen's Park. They're not. When a carpenter comes to my fundraiser, they're not looking to get a contract at Queen's Park. But when the large renewable developer or the bank pays \$10,000 for entertainment with the minister in a dark room, beyond the view of anybody, what are they actually expecting? It's not the same, and these people should be talking about what they've done, not what—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: This is my first opportunity to speak on this. I've been listening to this debate all afternoon. Where this all started is where several major news organizations, including the *Star* and the *Globe and Mail*, identified that ministers of the crown had fundraising targets for their party. For the average person, the perception was, "Are they actually working on the government's behalf or trying to fill their fundraising targets?" That's where this all started.

Let's be realistic: An MPP on the opposition side or, quite frankly, a backbench MPP does not have the power of a minister or the influence of a minister. With that power and influence comes responsibility, and therefore the level of scrutiny should be higher. And when there's a question of whether ministers have fundraising targets, that, quite frankly, does not pass the smell test of the level of scrutiny.

The government responds, and what's happening now with the bill—do we have to fix things? Yes, but this bill is trying to paint everyone with the same level of responsibility. Let's face it: On the opposition side, we are not ministers. Ministers have more influence. We all have to fundraise, but there is a difference between being a minister and being an MPP on the opposition side; let's make that clear. What's happening here is that that is

trying to be, by the government, washed over and washed over and washed over.

That is the biggest issue here. We all have to fundraise. It has to be public, but we have to make sure that the influence of the government isn't being used more than it should be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I listened to the four members who spoke here on the government side. I'm supposed to do two minutes and comment on what they said, but I also wanted to say—and it was mentioned by some of our members here. We've been in power since 2003. Before that, the Conservatives were in power, and I can only imagine what went on when they were in government, what Mike Harris did to raise money. To say that Mike Harris never raised money or never had special fundraisers with himself or his cabinet ministers is almost unbelievable. I don't know what happened when the NDP were in power; I wasn't around at that time. But to say that you guys come here with clean hands is not the right thing to say. I can only imagine.

Here's the big difference, Mr. Speaker: We're doing something about it. They did nothing about it. They never addressed the issue. We're doing something. It's called Bill 2, and it's right in front of us. We're doing something that they never did. We're doing something that has to be done: change the rules for fundraising. They never did it. They were in power. They had a chance to do it. They did nothing. We're doing something about it.

The bill was introduced before prorogation, and it went straight to committee for consultation, which is an unusual step. Usually it's debated in this House and then sent to committee, but it was sent to committee because we wanted to hear from the public and stakeholders. Then we had the prorogation. It was one of the first bills reintroduced. We're debating it now, and it will go back to committee. There will probably be more discussion at that time. So we're doing something about it.

It's really, really interesting when the opposition members get up and say, "Your government did this and your cabinet ministers did that and you had quotas." I can only imagine what happened when they were in power.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Speaker, I want to start off speaking to Bill 2 to just make sure that people understand that my colleague from Wellington-Halton Hills introduced a similar bill in 2011. My colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex introduced one in 2013. I, as recently as the fall of 2015, introduced a PMB and the Liberals unanimously voted against that. So if they really wanted to change it and if they really wanted to be transparent and open, they could have done it then, but unanimously, they voted against it.

Then we hear in the media—and I'm going to use a little bit of a different phraseology, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to do it this way: "What do you say? What do you pay? What will you pay to gain access to a Liberal

cabinet minister today?" That's what I heard. I heard that. And then it was sold to a \$10,000 top bidder to gain access to a cabinet minister. That is totally unacceptable.

They're trying to spin that we're all the same here. We're not all the same. Someday maybe I'll be lucky enough to be a cabinet minister. I doubt it, but hopefully. But do you know what, Mr. Speaker? I don't sign agreements. I don't have the influence to be able to negotiate agreements. I don't take money backwards after some of those decisions are made somewhere outside of this House.

At the end of the day, the media did their job and they brought it and the public said, "Yes, we want to know more about it. We need to understand what's going on here. It's not right. It's not acceptable." To have quotas and targets—even the perception of quotas and targets—the public loses faith. They start to look at all of us in a cynical manner, and that's unacceptable because I don't have the ability to influence. I don't have the ability to sign a contract for things like the Green Energy Act, which we now know they've done a flip-flop and back-pedalled on that. Finally, there's going to be at least a little bit of hope for the people out there.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Yes, after they spent billions and billions of dollars that could have gone to our schools and to our home care. So, Mr. Speaker, we had to stop the insanity. We had to bring it to light. I hope they'll do the right thing and actually bring it to all of us so we can actually put legislation that will serve the public first, not the Liberals and certainly not the Liberal cabinet ministers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Member from Trinity-Spadina, two minutes.

Mr. Han Dong: I want to thank the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane, and also the member from Scarborough Southwest and the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for their comments on this bill.

I just want to remind the viewers in front of the TV that there are a whole bunch of laws and processes in place to make sure that transparency and accountability are respected in all government decisions. There is the Auditor General. There is the Integrity Commissioner. There is the Financial Accountability Officer. They all have the power to look at government operations and how decisions are made. So to say that the minister has ultimate power in making decisions on his or her own and has complete discretion is just false. That's not right.

If I understand it correctly, the members from the official opposition party are saying, "There should be strict rules on the government side, but there shouldn't be any rules on our side. We can do whatever we want because we have no influence. We have no influence on how government contracts are signed." And I want to tell them that, do you know what? There are processes in place to make sure that everything is transparent and open to the public. I also want to say, to the point about

how ministers have influence because they've been lobbied on and all these contracts and stuff, that the Premier directed the caucus to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Han Dong: —to stop large-scale—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Mr. Han Dong: —fundraising—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. When I say “thank you,” member, you sit down. I had to do it three times. I don’t appreciate it.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 o’clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of International Trade / Ministre du Commerce International
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
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Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism / Ministre délégué à l'Action contre le racisme
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Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Superior North / Thunder Bay—Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener—Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor—Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough—Guildwood	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges—Markham	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin—Caledon	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa—Orléans	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering—Scarborough East / Pickering—Scarborough-Est	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton—Mississippi Mills	Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean—Carleton	Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton—Springdale	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga—Brampton South / Mississauga—Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma—Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay—Atikokan	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable du Gouvernement numérique
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton—Kent—Middlesex	
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke—Lakeshore	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound—Muskoka	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East—Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est—Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care) / Ministre associée de l'Éducation (Petite enfance et Garde d'enfants)
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	Attorney General / Procureur général
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales
		Premier / Première ministre
		Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest-Glanbrook	
Vacant	Ottawa-Vanier	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Han Dong
Michael Harris, Sophie Kiwala
Arthur Potts, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Peter Z. Milczyn, Lou Rinaldi
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Yvan Baker, Mike Colle
Grant Crack, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Harinder Malhi
Jim McDonell, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przezdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Présidente: Cristina Martins
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
James J. Bradley, Raymond Sung Joon Cho
Wayne Gates, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przezdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Bob Delaney, Randy Hillier
Michael Mantha, Cristina Martins
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qaadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
James J. Bradley, Steve Clark
Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
John Fraser, Ernie Hardeman
Percy Hatfield, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Arthur Potts
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Ted McMeekin, Mario Sergio
Bill Walker, Soo Wong
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch